Bengaluru Monday, February 16, 2026 Pages 16 Vol 79 No 47 ₹7

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The Power of Good

India thrash Pakistan by 61 runs

Kishan's 77, all-round bowling effort help Men In Blue qualify for Super 8s

Page 15

Pvt investment key to next leap: Modi

Says govt plugged structural gaps, seeks aggressive private R&D push

NEW DELHI, PTI

With the government having done much of the heavy lifting through an aggressive capex push in recent years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said it is now time for the private sector to step up, invest boldly and drive the next phase of innovation-led, globally-competitive growth.

In an exclusive interview to *PTI*, Modi said his government has used its years in office to plug the "structural gaps left behind by earlier administrations", pursue bold reforms and lay the foundations for a developed India.

Asserting that the just-unveiled Union Budget marks the "next level" of that journey, he said the FY27 Budget sharply scales up capital expenditure to Rs 12.2 lakh crore — a five-time increase compared to 2013 — reinforcing the government's strategy of prioritising infrastructure creation, logistics expansion and investment in sunrise sectors to drive long-term growth.

> "The next phase of transformation requires a decisive response from the private sector. Indian firms must invest more aggressively in research and development, adopt frontier technologies, deepen supply-chain capabilities and compete on quality and productivity rather than on protected margins.
>
> **NARENDRA MODI**
> Prime Minister

Calling productive spending a hallmark of his government, Modi said the Budget deliberately avoided short-term populism and instead channelled record capital outlays into infrastructure.

"However, I want to use this opportunity to make a request to the dynamic private corporate sector. Policy can only create the enabling framework. The next phase of transformation requires a decisive response from the private sector," he said in the written interview.

Indian firms must invest more aggressively in research and development and adopt frontier technologies, Modi added.

▸ Modi, Page 7

Talks from 'position of strength'

Modi said political stability has restored investor confidence in India and that stronger manufacturing, services and MSMEs have enabled it to negotiate free trade pacts with 38 countries from a "position of strength".
Details on Page 10

Rahul poses questions

Rahul Gandhi stepped up the attack on the Centre over the US trade deal, claiming one is witnessing a "betrayal of India's farmers" as he posed questions to the PM seeking "clear answers".
Details on Page 10

India, France to renew defence ties during Bengaluru talks tomorrow

KALYAN RAY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

India and France will hold the sixth annual bilateral defence meeting in Bengaluru on February 17, during which the two nations will renew a 10-year cooperation agreement and sign a memorandum of understanding on the production of Hammer missiles in India in partnership with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), officials said.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his French counterpart Catherine Vautrin will also witness the virtual inauguration of the H125 Light Utility Helicopter final assembly line of Tata-Airbus by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron at Vemagal in Kolar district.

The high-level engagement between the two ministers will lead to the renewal of the defence cooperation, with an enhanced focus on expanding industrial collaboration.

Traditionally, defence has been an important pillar of the relationship between New Delhi and Paris. The strong and enduring bilateral ties were reflected in 2024-2025 through a series of high-profile exchanges.

▸ Defence, Page 7

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The two nations will renew a 10-year cooperation agreement and sign an MoU on production of Hammer missiles in India

- Rajnath Singh and Catherine Vautrin will witness the inauguration of the Tata-Airbus final assembly line for Airbus H125 helicopters at Vemagal
- An announcement on reciprocal deployment of officers at the Indian Army and French Land Forces establishments is also expected

AI Impact Summit begins today; focus on inclusivity, impact

Global leaders, CEOs of top tech firms to gather in New Delhi

UMA KANNAN
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The India AI Impact Summit 2026, one of the biggest artificial intelligence conclaves in the Global South, will begin in New Delhi on Monday.

The high-profile event, which will be held from February 16 to 20 at the Bharat Mandapam, will focus on inclusive and impact-driven AI.

It is expected to witness participation from over 100 countries, including 15-20 heads of government, including French President Emmanuel Macron and Brazilian President Lula da Silva, and over 50 ministers from various countries.

The summit happens at a time when AI is reshaping businesses, industries and daily life. More than 40 CEOs of global and Indian tech companies, including OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, Google and Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai and Mistral AI co-founder and CEO Arthur Mensch, are expected to participate.

The summit has seen more than 35,000 registrations.

▸ AI Impact, Page 7

Earlier AI GATHERINGS

- AI Safety Summit at Bletchley Park, UK (2023)
- Seoul Summit (2024)
- Paris meet (2025)
- These summits focused on frontier risks, safety guardrails and voluntary commitments
- The India summit will focus on developmental impact and real-world applications

The venue of India AI Impact Summit in New Delhi. AFP

Five youth killed as speeding car rams bus

BENGALURU, DHNS: In a horrific accident on the Bengaluru-Tumakuru national highway, five young men were killed after their car jumped the median and rammed into a KSRTC bus heading towards Hubballi, officials said.

The accident occurred around 11.30 pm on Saturday on the Chikkabidarakallu flyover, opposite the Canara Bank near Jindal City.

Details on Page 5

RENEWING RELATIONS

Speaker to attend Rahman's swearing-in

NEW DELHI, DHNS

As Tarique Rahman is set to be sworn in as the new prime minister of Bangladesh on Tuesday, New Delhi has decided to send Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to Dhaka to represent India at the oath-taking ceremony.

Birla will be accompanied by Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri. An invitation from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to his new counterpart in Dhaka for an early visit to New Delhi is also likely to be conveyed after the ceremony.

The BNP, led by Tarique Rahman, won the parliamentary elections in Bangladesh, beating Jamaat-e-Islami. The participation of the Lok Sabha Speaker at this event would underscore the deep and enduring friendship between the peoples of India and Bangladesh.

It would also reaffirm India's steadfast commitment to the democratic values that bind it to Bangladesh, the MEA said.

The BNP had invited Modi to attend the swearing-in ceremony.

▸ Om Birla, Page 6

B'desh seeks to reset ties

Bangladesh wants to reset ties with India now that ousted premier Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League no longer hold power, Humayun Kabir, adviser to Tarique Rahman, has said.
Details on Page 14

Missing B'luru student found dead in California

BENGALURU, DHNS: The search for a 22-year-old student from Bengaluru ended in tragedy as police in California recovered his body from a lake. Saketh Sreenivasaiah, a master's student at the University of California, had been missing since February 9.

According to his roommate, Saketh had shown signs of mental distress in the weeks leading up to his disappearance.

Details on Page 5

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The evening will feature a formal ceremony, followed by a cultural extravaganza by the Abhinava Dance Company of Nirupama and Rajendra and conclude with dinner.

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NATURAL OR LAB-GROWN DIAMONDS?

THE DEBATE CONTINUES, AND WILL NEVER END.
YET WHAT TRULY MATTERS IS FINDING
THE BRILLIANCE THAT RESONATES WITH YOU.

A CASE FOR THE MOST BEAUTIFUL DIAMONDS

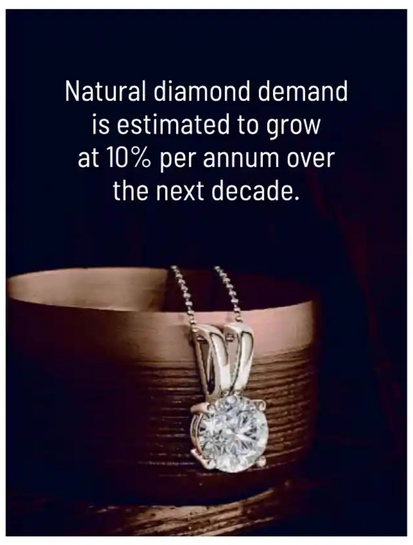
Understanding Natural Diamonds

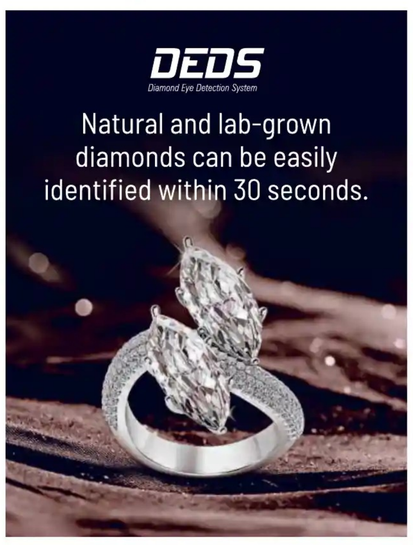
In the world of fine jewellery, the natural vs. lab-grown diamond debate reflects more than just origin, it's a conversation about heritage, value, and personal meaning.

Natural diamonds are formed deep within the Earth over millions to billions of years, shaped by forces beyond human reach, while lab-grown diamonds are created in controlled environments that replicate nature's conditions in a matter of weeks or months. Though visually and physically indistinguishable to the eye, these two paths to diamond creation carry very different narratives, one rooted in earth-born rarity, the other in technological innovation and accessibility.

At C. Krishniah Chetty, we offer both natural and lab-grown diamonds to reflect the diverse values and preferences of tomorrow's consumers. Those drawn to heritage, rarity, and timeless appeal choose DiamondAir™ Natural Diamonds, while those who value price, innovation, and man-made production explore crash.club™ Lab-Grown Diamonds. Both categories meet the same standards of brilliance, quality, and craftsmanship that define our brand.

Like many things today, there is no right or wrong. It's a choice, for the first time in the history of the world.





Why Natural Diamonds?
Earth's timeless masterpiece

Natural diamonds are among Earth's rarest treasures. Formed 150 to 400 kilometers beneath the surface under immense pressure, approximately 3,30,000 kilograms per square inch, and temperatures exceeding 1093°C, each stone is inherently unique. Volcanic eruptions bring them closer to the surface through kimberlite pipes, a journey that takes upto 3 billion years.

This geological rarity cannot be replicated. Each natural diamond carries an irreplaceable sense of origin, shaped by time and the planet's ancient forces.

It's from Mother Earth, like you.

Why natural diamonds Endure

INVESTMENT VALUE
Natural diamonds have historically been a great store of value, particularly rare specimens with high quality, exceptional colour, clarity, and provenance. They represent tangible assets that transcend generations.

EMOTIONAL LEGACY
For centuries, natural diamonds have symbolized love, commitment, and milestones. They carry emotional weight that connects the giver to the receiver across time.

INTRINSIC CONNECTION
Owning a diamond formed over billions of years creates a profound connection to Earth's history. It's a piece of the planet's evolution.

C. Krishniah Chetty, The World Diamond Council (WDC) and the entire Diamond Fraternity commits to the progress of Natural Diamond Excellence.

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To honor the legacy and rarity of natural diamonds, C. Krishniah Chetty's DiamondAir™ is an exclusive collection dedicated entirely to natural diamonds and solitaires. Sourced from the world's finest mines in Russia, Africa, and Canada, each DiamondAir™ natural diamond is selected for exceptional light performance and cut with precision to maximize brilliance.

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The Standard of Ethics

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Diamond Eye Detection System

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*Discover Natural Diamond Fact Sheet

*Scan for DEDS & SOE

155 YEARS

LAB-GROWN OR NATURAL DIAMONDS?

THE DEBATE CONTINUES, AND WILL NEVER END.
YET WHAT TRULY MATTERS IS FINDING
THE BRILLIANCE THAT RESONATES WITH YOU.

A CASE FOR
SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS

Understanding Lab-Grown Diamonds

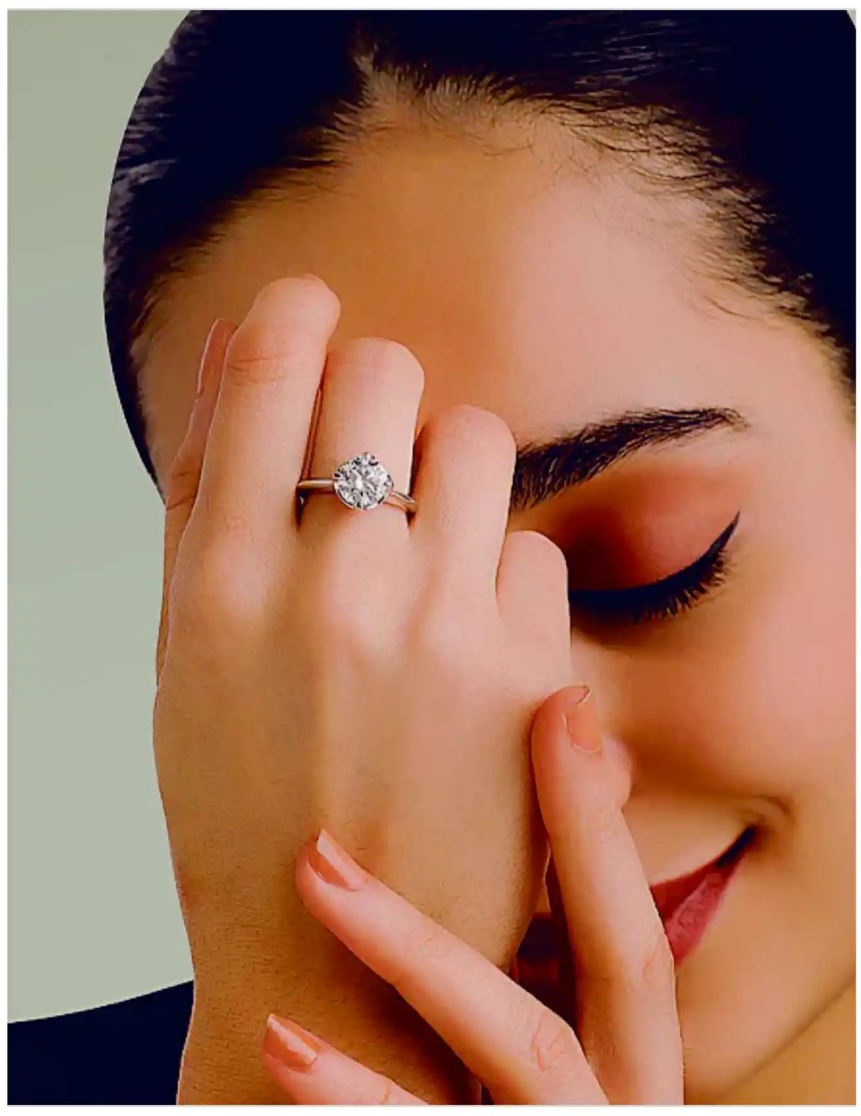
Today, lab-grown diamonds reflect modern innovation in fine jewellery, reframing the conversation from origin to values of accessibility, transparency, and personal expression.

Lab-grown diamonds represent a convergence of science and craftsmanship. Using technology of Chemical Vapor Deposition (CVD), a diamond seed is placed in a plasma reactor where controlled heat, pressure, and carbon-rich gases enable crystallization layer by layer; High Pressure, High Temperature (HPHT), and other processes decided by the rough natural diamond or the business goals of each lab/ factory producer. Lab grown diamonds are "grown" layer by layer within 2 to 4 weeks. Diamonds of exceptional clarity and optical performance emerge, chemically, physically, and visually identical to natural diamonds.

The difference lies not in the stone itself, but in its quick production, in larger sizes, at affordable prices.

For many, lab-grown diamonds offer a thoughtful choice, celebrating beauty and brilliance while aligning with modern priorities, flexibility, and design freedom, without compromising the emotional significance traditionally associated with diamonds today worldwide.

It's not a why-not question.
It's a choice, for the first time in history of the world.



Remember, synthetic rubies were first synthesized in 1880. Natural ruby production grew by 125%, and synthetic ruby production also grew by 125% over the last decade.

Natural & Lab grown Diamond market is expected to grow in the same way in future.

DEDS
Diamond Eye Detection System

Visit any of our magnificent showrooms to test your diamonds within 30 seconds. Natural and lab-grown diamonds are clearly identifiable.

Why Lab-grown Diamonds?
A Modern Advantage

Fewer natural resources used, other than massive amounts of power. Lab-grown diamonds production eliminates mining's environmental impact. They hope to represent a lighter footprint on the planet.

Why lab-grown diamonds are also a choice

ACCESSIBILITY
Typically 30-80% lower in price than natural diamonds, they are more affordable than natural diamonds of equivalent quality.

With 90% of consumers unable to afford natural diamonds, lab-grown diamonds offer a new and affordable entry option.

DESIGN VERSATILITY
The predictability of lab-grown production allows for greater customization and creative expression in jewellery design.

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The Vision for Lab-Grown Diamond Jewellery - introduced in 2019, to commemorate our 150 years.

Just as DiamondAir™ embodies our dedication to natural diamonds, crash.club™ represents our commitment to progressive offerings to our clients – with lab-grown diamond excellence. This is C. Krishniah Chetty's contemporary jewellery sub-brand, where lab-grown diamonds meet bold and experimental design.

Inspired by the strength of the rare and enigmatic rhino, every piece crafted with lab-grown diamonds becomes a statement of style, ethics, and impact. From avant-garde forms to wildlife-inspired motifs, crash.club™ empowers wearers to embrace modern luxury while contributing to meaningful change.

Say yes to the new.

The law now mandates what we've practiced since 1955*

*Since 1955, when diamonds were first commercially synthesized by General Electric, C. Krishniah Chetty has clearly identified lab-grown diamonds in every medium, never presenting them simply as "diamonds," even in passing or implication.

Natural and lab-grown diamonds are always presented separately, clearly identified, and supported by complete documentation at every stage. Categories are never mixed. Terminology is never diluted.

ETHICS BEFORE REGULATION

Today, the Bureau of Indian Standards formalises what we have always practiced.

No misleading sales or advertisement statements – be they on radio, press, television or even in passing. It's now the law! Lab grown diamonds must be depicted as "LAB-GROWN DIAMONDS" and not simply as diamonds or any other misleading statements*.

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*Discover Lab-grown Diamonds Fact Sheet

*Scan to learn Synthetic Rubies Since 1880

Old Madras Road chokes as GBA drags its feet on flyover plan

Residents raise concerns over fund prioritisation

The civic body replaces cobblestones of a footpath in front of the Baiyappanahalli police station, though they were in a good condition; the work involves neither utility shifting nor creation of separate ducts. DH PHOTO/NAVEEN MENEZES

NAVEEN MENEZES
BENGALURU, DHNS

On Old Madras Road, commuters are trapped in a daily ritual of frustration. Vehicles crawl bumper-to-bumper, tempers fray, and what should be a smooth ride across four signals between KR Puram and Halasuru takes close to an hour if not more.

While the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has shown little urgency in fast-tracking the long-pending flyover project, it is spending money on what residents call "unnecessary" works along the same stretch.

Prominent among them is the replacement of cobblestones on footpaths that were already in good condition. Another is the redesign of the traffic island at Suranjadas Road Junction, which appears no different from the earlier one.

Residents have questioned the prioritisation of funds.

Old Madras Road is a key arterial route connecting the city to Whitefield and beyond. During peak hours, stretches near major junctions such as Baiyappanahalli, Indiranagar BDA Complex, and Halasuru turn into chokepoints.

Commuters say the delay in addressing traffic congestion has only compounded the problem over the years. "I spend more time at these three signals than on the rest of the commute," said a daily office-goer, who works at a large firm in Halasuru. "It's frustrating to see unnecessary works being prioritised."

Earlier, Old Madras Road was part of the government's plan to build an East-West elevated corridor linking KR Puram and Yeshwantpur.

After the proposal was shelved, the civic body laid a foundation stone in mid-2018 for the construction of an underpass at Suranjadas Road Junction. The proposal was later dropped, with Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar reviving the earlier plan of building an elevated corridor.

A senior official of Bengaluru Smart Infrastructure Ltd (B-SMILE) said the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the elevated corridor is ready. "Once the state cabinet clears the proposal, we will float tenders," he said.

Sources in the GBA told *DH* that considerable time and money were being "wasted" on DPRs and consultants.

"The DPR of the East-West elevated corridor passing through Old Madras Road was already ready. There was no need to pay private consultants for the same work. The government has wasted two years," a source said.

'DULT must first vet flyover design'

Independent mobility consultant Satya Arikutharam said that while a flyover can theoretically add capacity, the proposal must be robust enough to ensure congestion is not merely shifted from one point to another.

"More often than not, flyovers transfer the problem to the next intersection, and civic authorities wrongly believe another flyover there will solve the congestion."

He urged the government to ensure Bengaluru Smart Infrastructure Ltd (B-SMILE) shares the plan with the Directorate of Urban Land Transport (DULT) for verification through traffic modelling to assess whether the added capacity would improve overall network efficiency.

NIGHT OF PRAYERS

(Left) On the occasion of Mahashivaratri, devotees pour milk over the Shivalinga at the Shesha Maha Balamuri Ganapathy Temple in Hanumanthnagar on Sunday. (Top) Prayers at the Sri Gayatri Devi Temple in Sri Mahayaaga Kshetra, Yeshwantpur. A young girl caught in a moment near Lord Shiva's idol at the Nagarbhavi Mallathahalli Ground. DH PHOTO/RANJU P

One-minute stoppage for four trains at Nayandahalli

BENGALURU, DHNS: Starting Monday, the following trains will have an experimental one-minute stoppage at Nayandahalli:

Train number 16215 Mysuru–KSR Bengaluru Chamundi Express will arrive at Nayandahalli at 8.45 am. Train number 16216 KSR Bengaluru–Mysuru Chamundi Express will arrive at 6.39 pm.

Train number 17307 Mysuru–Bagalkot Basava Express will arrive at Nayandahalli at 3.16 pm. Train number 17308 Bagalkot–Mysuru Basava Express will arrive at Nayandahalli at 8.19 am.

Train number 16235 Tuticorin–Mysuru Express will arrive at Nayandahalli at 6.49 am. Train number 16236 Mysuru–Tuticorin Express will arrive at 8.14 pm.

Train number 16535 Mysuru–Pandharpur Gol Gumbaz Express will arrive at Nayandahalli at 5.40 pm. Train number 16536 Pandharpur–Mysuru Gol Gumbaz Express will arrive at 7.44 am.

Vizag special train extended

BENGALURU, DHNS: The railways has extended the special train between Visakhapatnam and SMVT Bengaluru to clear the extra rush of passengers for Holi.

Train number 08581 Visakhapatnam–SMVT Bengaluru Weekly Express, which runs on Sundays, has been extended until March 29.

Train number 08582 SMVT Bengaluru–Visakhapatnam Weekly Express, running on Mondays, has been extended until March 30.

Two pairs of trains to skip B'luru Cantt

BENGALURU, DHNS: Due to foot overbridge and air concourse (part 2) works at Bengaluru Cantonment, the following trains will be diverted from February 17 to March 16:

Train number 06269 Mysuru–SMVT Bengaluru Daily Passenger Special will be diverted via KSR Bengaluru–Yeshwantpur–Banaswadi–SMVT Bengaluru, skipping Bengaluru Cantonment.

Similarly, train number 06270 SMVT Bengaluru–Mysuru Daily Passenger Special will be diverted via SMVT Bengaluru–Banaswadi–Yeshwantpur–KSR Bengaluru, skipping Bengaluru Cantonment.

The DOSA code: One gene, three disorders

Weak heart, weight gain, sleep trouble linked to mutation

ASHWIN BM
BENGALURU, DHNS

For years, being overweight, having a weak heart, or struggling with sleep (apnoea) were seen as separate issues, mostly blamed on poor diet or lack of exercise.

Bengaluru researchers now show that, for some, all three stem from a single genetic disorder.

They call this condition DOSA — an acronym for dilated cardiomyopathy (heart weakening), obesity, and sleep apnoea.

The team, led by Prof Dhandapany at BRIC-inStem, began by studying a family at the Jayadeva Institute with severe heart and metabolic issues. Their DNA revealed a "glitch" in the 'KCNA2' gene.

This gene acts as a gatekeeper for potassium, keeping the heart beating steadily. In DOSA, these "gates" get trapped inside the cell—causing a biological traffic jam.

This triggers a false alarm in the RAC1-ERK pathway, which stays permanently ON. The result: a weaker heart, excess fat storage, and disrupted sleep.

To confirm it was not a local issue, the Bengaluru team worked with scientists in Estonia. They identified people across the world with the same genetic glitch and symptoms. DOSA is a global condition, not limited to one region.

Simple solution

The breakthrough is not just the discovery, but a possible cure.

Researchers grew "beating heart cells" and 3D organoid models from patients' skin cells and tested Simvastatin—a common, affordable cholesterol drug.

In the lab, the drug halted the harmful reaction, improved heart function, reduced body fat, and even aided sleep.

Why this is a gamechanger

This Made-in-India research lifts the stigma for patients who struggle with weight and heart issues despite healthy habits.

Sometimes, biology, not behaviour, is the culprit.

More clinical trials are needed before Simvastatin (a common, affordable cholesterol drug) can be prescribed for DOSA, but this research offers new hope. Understanding our DNA may lead to simple, affordable treatments for complex diseases.

Doctors alarmed as myopia surges in children under 5

AMULLYA SHIVASHANKAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

Children aged under five are increasingly being diagnosed with myopia, city ophthalmologists say, attributing it to high screen use and reduced outdoor activity.

Doctors say the Covid-19 pandemic shifted students' attention entirely to screens, and the trend continues.

Dr Bhanumathi M, head of paediatric ophthalmology at a private healthcare organisation, said: "The cases of myopia have increased significantly. We are seeing these cases in children as young as two. High screen time and complete indoor isolation have contributed to the rise. School activities that were once noted in diaries are now recorded on apps, forcing children to depend on screens."

Doctors also report more cases of digital eye strain, dryness, headaches, and occasional squinting or eye misalignment. Rising levels of pollution and dust in major cities are causing chronic allergic conjunctivitis, they added.

DR BHANUMATHI M
Head of paediatric ophthalmology at a private healthcare organisation

"There should be some policy by the government to reduce screen time. Australia has banned social media for children. Something of that sort must be done for younger children here, too.

Explaining the cause, Dr Savitha Arun, director and medical superintendent at a private eye hospital, said: "Myopia happens when the eyeball becomes longer than normal, causing distant objects to appear blurred. In a growing child, the eye is still developing, so prolonged screen use without breaks and outdoor exposure may accelerate this elongation."

Early prevention can reverse damage, but once axial elongation begins, the change is permanent, explains Dr Bhabha Reddy, Consultant (Ophthalmology).

"When axial elongation begins, this new type of refractive error is permanent unless tackled with active control. Remedies such as outdoor activities, low-dose atropine therapy, and various lens options can curb progression, but there is limited capacity to reverse axial elongation. Early detection and management can prevent significant changes."

Dr Bhanumathi added that according to predictions in ophthalmology, by 2050, half of the population will be myopic, if the dependency on screens continues. "There should be some policy by the government to reduce screen time. Australia has banned social media for children. Something of that sort must be done for younger children here, too," she added.

Three-year-old drowns in artificial pond at photo studio

BENGALURU, DHNS: A three-year-old boy drowned in an artificial pond during a maternity photoshoot at a studio on the outskirts of Bengaluru, police said on Sunday.

The boy had accompanied his mother to Shire Studio in Giddenahalli near Madanayakanahalli for her friend's maternity photoshoot on Saturday afternoon.

While the mother got busy with the photoshoot, the child wandered around unnoticed.

Around 15 to 20 minutes later, the mother realised he was missing and a frantic search was launched.

"The boy was found in an artificial pond inside the studio, which had been dug up for photoshoot purposes. He was later declared dead at a hospital," a police investigator told *DH*.

The Madanayakanahalli police have registered an Unnatural Death Report (UDR). The postmortem is expected to be concluded on Sunday night, police said.

Police said the boy's father works at a private firm and is currently in the US on a work trip.

Ageing power line to be replaced in Bannerghatta Park

BENGALURU, DHNS: A high-tension power line passing through the northern part of Bannerghatta National Park (BNP) for nearly 40 years will soon be replaced.

The Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation Limited (KPTCL) has finalised the replacement work to prevent untoward incidents.

The company said the 400-kV line from Somanahalli-Mylasandra was constructed before the 1980s.

"Any severe incidents due to the snapping of the conductor or deteriorated insulators of the towers could potentially lead to forest fires and consequent harm to wildlife, including the death of wild animals and harm to the public," the company said.

It said the existing towers would be replaced with narrow-based high-rise towers, increasing the height of the bottom conductor (transmission line) to 10 metres. The width (right of way) corridor would be reduced from 52 metres to 42 metres. The company has sought 10.9-acre forest land.

Last month, the chief wildlife warden of Karnataka recommended that increasing the height was "required to ensure safe electrical clearances, system stability and reliable power transmission".

The standing committee of the national board of wildlife recommended the project with directions to take measures to mitigate the impact on wildlife, complete construction work between 6 am and 6 pm, and follow other conditions of the board and state authorities.

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

Seminar: 'Decline of Social Values and its Consequences'; Santosh Hegde and Dinesh Nilkant to attend; Jain University, Lalbagh Main Road, Sudhamanagar; 11 am.

CULTURAL

Drama: 'Bhima Pratigne'; Inauguration by H Shivaramegowda; Directed by K Sridharamurthy; Organised by Karnataka Ranga Sangeetha Parishat; Ravindra Kalakshetra, JC Road; 2.30 pm.

DH DECCAN HERALD
Please contact for subscription/ service queries
(late receipt, non receipt or irregular supply of newspaper)
: 9008366666
: support@deccanherald.co.in

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST

Mainly clear sky

TEMPERATURES

Maximum	31.0°C
Minimum	17.0°C
Rainfall (as of 8:30 am)	--
Humidity (as of 5:30 pm)	35%
Sunset (Feb 16)	6:25 pm
Sunrise (Feb 17)	6:42 am
Moonrise	5:01 am
Moonset	4:38 pm

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

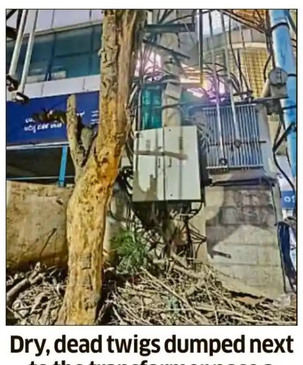
Invites to be published in this column should be sent to: **incitytoday@deccanherald.co.in.** Please note that hard copies will not be accepted

Need a hand? Write to us

Letters of grievances are pouring in and we are doing our best to accommodate as many as possible. Readers may write in to highlight civic problems affecting their locality and we will help address them in an interactive and effective manner.

Grievances and issues related to public utility agencies such as Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) and Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited (Bescom) would be highlighted in the weekly column.

The writeups, which could be accompanied by photographs highlighting the problems, will be published on Mondays. Mail your grievances to: peoplesproblems @deccanherald.co.in



Dry, dead twigs dumped next to the transformer pose a serious risk to the locality.

Fire hazard near transformer

Despite sharing photographs, sending reminders, and continuous follow-ups, authorities are yet to take action regarding the fire hazard caused by the dumping of dead and dried twigs next to a transformer in Aditya Nagar, Vidyaranyapura Post.

Officials from the fire force, civic agencies, and Bescom need to survey all such public utilities in a time-bound manner and ensure that preventive measures are in place. Linemen and other staff must also be educated and instructed to keep areas around transformers and other installations free from dry waste and debris.

V Chandeeswara G,
Aditya Nagar,
Vidyaranyapura Post

Switch on lights at Goraguntepalya

The streetlights next to the Goraguntepalya metro station all the way up to the Yeshwantpur flyover have not been switched on at all for many years now.

This is creating safety issues and a hazard for pedestrians. The authorities should swing into action and fix this issue. Immediate action will greatly improve safety, pedestrian confidence, and overall public welfare in the area.

Malati & Madhav

Late platform announcement at Yeshwantpur

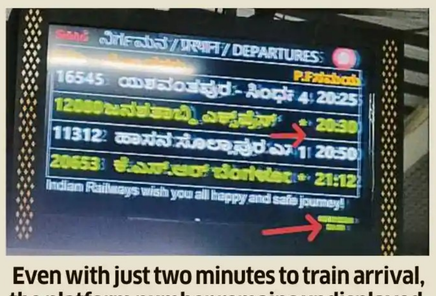
At the Yeshwantpur railway station, announcements of platform allocation are made just a few minutes before the arrival of a train, sometimes in less than five minutes. This forces travellers to run in chaos to reach their platform.

The elderly, women and late-comers panic, especially when they have to move swiftly. Moreover, there is no enquiry desk.

The station authorities must ensure that the announcements are made well in advance, giving travellers sufficient time to reach the platform.

In the attached photo, even with just two minutes left for the train's arrival, the platform number is not displayed.

Viswanatha HK,
AG's Layout, RMV 2nd stage



Even with just two minutes to train arrival, the platform number remains undisplayed.

Frequent power cuts are unfair

Frequent power cuts by Bescom are causing major frustration. While long outages of six to eight hours are sometimes notified as "maintenance", short power cuts of 15–30 minutes happen almost daily without warning.

Questions arise: What exactly is being done during "maintenance"? Who supervises it? Do senior engineers inspect the work? If maintenance was effective, why do unscheduled outages continue?

As a senior citizen and resident of Dinnur 2nd Cross, this is extremely frustrating. Customer service often has no answers, leaving citizens with no clear authority to appeal to. God save us.

Hemachandra Babu D

Residential realty in 2026: Volume to value, housing to living

Homebuyers have turned more discerning and are seeking spaces that offer quality lifestyle. For developers, credibility, track record and sustainability are key factors in this market, writes **Mallanna Sasalu**, Chief Executive Officer - South, Puravankara Ltd, looking into what 2026 holds for the sector

Mallanna Sasalu, Chief Executive Officer - South, Puravankara Ltd

"Access to capital markets, stronger balance sheets, tighter governance standards and greater visibility of listed developers translate to higher buyer confidence..."

India's residential real estate market enters 2026 on a firm footing, not because it chased excess, but because it absorbed discipline. Sales across major cities remained broadly stable in 2025 at close to six lakh units, while the total value of transactions climbed to nearly Rs 6 lakh crore. That combination of steady volumes alongside rising value signals a market that has matured, not one that has slowed.

After the post-pandemic surge, price growth moderated into single digits, but higher realisations, premiumisation and better affordability ensured continued value expansion. Buyers did not retreat - they recalibrated. Decisions are now driven less by urgency and more by financial readiness, confidence in income stability and clarity on long-term use. In that sense, 2025 was not a year of hesitation but a year of discernment, and that mindset carries decisively into 2026.

Consumption: The real engine

A commonly held view is that Global Capability Centres (GCCs) have been the primary drivers of residential property demand in the recent years. While GCCs have certainly contributed to employment growth in select urban clusters, this fact captures only part of the picture.

India's housing demand continues to be supported by a far broader employment base. Core software services, information systems, domestic enterprises, manufacturing-linked services, start-ups and the steady formalisation of the economy collectively employ a significantly larger workforce. These segments have provided continuity and depth to urban job creation.

More importantly, what has worked decisively in India's favour is the rise in internal consumption. Higher disposable incomes, sustained job creation across sectors and renewed consumer confidence have strengthened household balance sheets. Home ownership decisions are increasingly rooted in long-term income visibility and confidence in economic stability, rather than short-term sectoral cycles. This consumption-led demand has given the residential market durability beyond any single driver.

Execution: Assurance matters

As prices have moved higher, buyers have become far more sensitive to risk. The cost of delays or project uncertainty is no longer something households are willing to absorb. This has led to a clear shift toward developers with a proven track record of execution, financial strength and transparent timelines.

In this environment, listed developers are in a structurally advantageous position. Access to capital markets, stronger balance sheets, tighter governance standards and greater visibility on execution have translated into higher buyer confidence. As the market becomes more selective, credibility increasingly acts as a demand magnet. Consolidation is a natural outcome of this phase, with organised, well-capitalised players gaining share as weaker participants struggle to remain relevant.

Infra shapes residential geography

Residential real estate growth in 2026 will remain highly location-specific. Infrastructure is the single strongest multiplier influencing demand. Metro Rail expansions, expressways, arterial road upgrades and airport-linked development are extending the practical radius of urban living. Suburban and peripheral micro-markets aligned with employment corridors are emerging as credible alternatives to traditional city cores, offering affordability without disconnecting residents from work hubs.

This trend is particularly visible in Tier I cities, where transit-led development is reshaping residential catchments. At the same time, Tier II and Tier III cities are gaining prominence. Improved connectivity, urban infrastructure upgrades and selective entry by organised developers are transforming several regional centres into self-sustaining residential markets, often registering faster percentage price growth than larger metros.

Housing colonies to living experiences

Perhaps the most significant shift underway is how buyers define value. Residential real estate is no longer evaluated as a mere unit or apartment. It is increasingly assessed as a living experience.

Across age groups, buyers are prioritising how homes support daily life, functionality, flexibility and longevity. Larger layouts, low-density developments, gated communities, plotted formats and villas continue to attract interest not just for space but also for quality of life. Open areas, community spaces, walkability and access to amenities have become central to decision-making.

Crucially, buyers are no longer looking for isolated housing colonies. They are seeking well-designed living environments - places that combine functionality with aesthetic coherence. Architectural character, thoughtful design, natural light, ventilation, landscaping and the overall visual appeal of a development are now actively evaluated. These attributes are not viewed as indulgences, but as contributors to long-term comfort, operating efficiency and resale value.

Environmental considerations have also moved firmly into the mainstream. Energy-efficient design, water management systems and cost-efficient construction are valued for their ability to reduce long-term expenses while enhancing sustainability. Homes are being chosen not just for today's needs, but for how they will age over decades.

Within the luxury segment, non-resident Indians continue to play a meaningful role. For many, residential property combines capital positioning with rental income, particularly in established urban markets and select lifestyle destinations. Here too, design quality and execution credibility carry significant weight.

Outlook for 2026

Residential real estate in 2026 will operate in a balanced market rather than an excess-driven one. The mid-segment will continue to anchor volumes, supported by consumption-led income growth and affordability. Premium and luxury housing will drive value, aided by domestic wealth creation and NRI participation. Supply additions are increasingly aligned with visible demand, keeping pricing movement within a reasonable and sustainable range.

Outcomes will vary sharply by location and by developer. Projects anchored in infrastructure connectivity, strong design and execution credibility will continue to attract steady interest. Others will find the environment more challenging.

The picture that emerges is one of normalisation with direction. India's residential real estate sector enters 2026 as a more disciplined, experience-driven and consumption-backed market, one that rewards credibility, design and long-term thinking over short-term excess.

Curated by DH Brandspot

Evolving realty market

- Homebuyers are now driven less by urgency and more by financial readiness, confidence in income stability and clarity on long-term use
- Connectivity infrastructure, employment corridors in suburban markets attracting homebuyers
- Tier II and III cities finding demand with affordability playing a major role
- Homebuyers no longer view residential units as a mere living space. They seek lifestyle experience
- Convenience, aesthetics, ergonomics and thoughtful design find favour with homebuyers
- Environmental factors - cost-efficiency, water management etc are significant in homebuying decision
- The market in 2026 promises to reward developers high on credibility and long-term sustainability apart from sound track record

Without RSS, BJP is weaker than JD(S): Priyank

BENGALURU, DHNS: Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister Priyank Kharge claimed on Sunday that the BJP was "weaker than the JD(S)" without RSS.

"Without RSS, the BJP is weaker than JD(S). We are fighting with the shadow of the ghost, which is useless. If RSS is the ghost, BJP is the shadow. The country will reform if we directly battle with the ghost."

He was speaking during the release of Journalist Irshad Uppinangady's work "Karavaliya Rakta Kanneeru."

"Mohan Bhagawat says the RSS need not register. However, they must register either today or tomorrow. I will make them do it. They say RSS is not an organisation but a people's forum. Even Bengaluru Club is a private organisation. Won't they register as per the law and pay taxes?," the minister sought to know.

He also took severe exception to the practice of "Guru Dakshina" in the RSS.

Missing Bengaluru student found dead in California

BENGALURU, DHNS

The week-long search for a 22-year-old postgraduate student from Bengaluru ended in tragedy as local police in California recovered his body from Lake Anza on Saturday afternoon.

Saketh Sreenivasaiah, a master's student at the University of California, Berkeley, had been missing since February 9.

Saketh S

The Consulate General of India in San Francisco confirmed the recovery of the body, expressing "deep regret" and extending condolences to the family. "The Consulate stands ready to provide all necessary assistance to the family, including coordination with local authorities and arrangements for the repatriation of mortal remains to India at the earliest," the mission stated on X social media platform.

Signs of distress

Saketh, an alumnus of IIT-Madras and a native of Srigandhada Kaval in western Bengaluru, was pursuing a degree in Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering. According to his roommate, Baneet Singh, the young student had shown signs of severe mental distress in the weeks leading up to his disappearance.

In a social media post, Singh recalled Saketh's growing withdrawal from daily life.

"There were no signs of anything until the last two weeks, when he started eating less and engaging less, only surviving on chips and cookies," Singh wrote.

He shared a haunting final conversation where he found Saketh returning from class wearing a red bathrobe. When questioned, Saketh reportedly replied, "I've stopped caring, man. I'm cold and don't care what anyone thinks of me. I don't care about anything."

Search and recovery

The alarm was first raised after Saketh's backpack, containing his passport and laptop, was found abandoned on a doorstep in the Park Hills neighbourhood near Tilden Regional Park. Following this, the Berkeley Police Department, along with sonar teams and divers from the Alameda County Sheriff's Office, launched an intensive search operation at Lake Anza.

Divers located the body just after 2 pm on Saturday. While a formal autopsy report from the Contra Costa County Coroner's Office is awaited.

State govt intervention

Earlier this week, Saketh's father, Sreenivasaiah, had approached the state government seeking intervention.

In response, Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh had written to the Ministry of External Affairs, urging diplomatic support to trace the student. The Consulate is currently in direct contact with the bereaved family to facilitate emergency visas for travel to the United States and the eventual return of the remains to Bengaluru.

5 youths killed as car jumps median, crashes into bus

BENGALURU, DHNS: In a tragic road accident on the Bengaluru-Tumakuru national highway, five young men were killed after their car jumped the road median and rammed into a KSRTC bus, officials said. The collision occurred around 11.30 pm on Saturday on the Chikkabidarakallu flyover, near Jindal City.

The car - a Tata Indica carrying five friends - was coming into Bengaluru when the driver allegedly lost control. Police believe the vehicle was being driven at high speed. The impact was so severe that the car was reduced to a mangled heap of metal.

KSRTC bus driver Kemparaj said: "I was driving towards Hubballi with 55 passengers when this car suddenly flew over the divider from the opposite side and hit us. Glass pieces flew everywhere, hitting me as well." Fortunately, all 55 passengers on board escaped without major injuries.

Police said the four victims were residents of Doddaballapur. They are Harshith (20), a second-year BCom student; Lalit Kumar (20) Gangadharapura Layout; Keshav (19) and Durga Prasad (20), both from Kallupete, and Dhanush.

Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Karthik Reddy said: "While travelling from the Nelamangala side, the car reportedly climbed the flyover ramp, crossed the divider, and crashed head-on into a KSRTC bus. It has been identified that a person named Keshav was driving the vehicle. We are investigating the cause of the accident. We have collected blood samples to be sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory to determine if they were driving under the influence of alcohol." He added that some passengers in the bus sustained minor injuries and received treatment at a local hospital.

Kumar worked as a CCTV camera operator. His mother, Rupa, a schoolteacher, recounted her last conversation with her son.

"He left home in the morning saying he was going to a temple with friends. I called him around 8.45 pm, and he said they were on their way back. We had no idea who owned the car," she said.

D L Nagesh, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Northwest), reached the spot shortly after the accident to oversee rescue operations.

Parents mourn their sons

BENGALURU, DHNS: The parents of young men killed in Saturday night's horrific accident broke down upon seeing the bodies at the government hospital mortuary on Sunday.

Manjula, the mother of 20-year-old Durga Prasad, one of the victims, wept. "After finishing PUC, my son had started working. He said he'd be back in 10 minutes, but returned as a dead body. Losing my only son has left me completely lost." Durga Prasad's father, Gururaj pleaded: "Please, no child should do things like this."

The mother of another victim, Harishit (20), cried, hugging his body. "He was at home until 8.30 pm. He said he was going to meet a friend and stepped out. He never returned."

The father of Dhanush, a third victim, said: "My son took his mother and younger brother to the bakery and bought them sweets. Then he said he'd be back in ten minutes and left. Police called to inform us of his death. My son was only 17 years old."

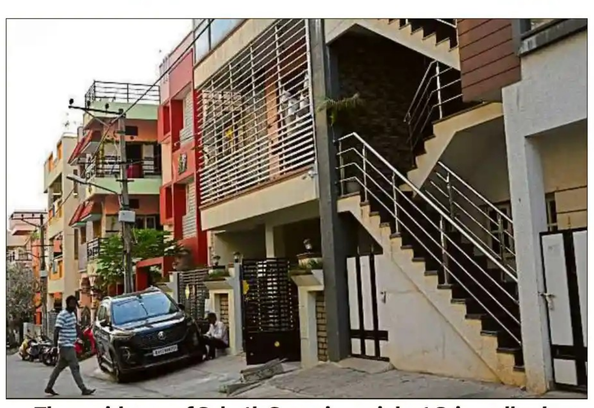
Family in shock, not ready to accept he's gone

ASHWIN B M
BENGALURU, DHNS

In western Bengaluru's Srigandhada Kaval, the family of 22-year-old Saketh Sreenivasaiah remains in a state of shock and disbelief.

Saketh, a UC Berkeley student who moved to the US on September 5, 2025, was found dead near Lake Anza on Saturday afternoon. His body was recovered by divers after a six-day intensive search.

Despite the official news, his parents are not ready to accept that their son is gone. Clinging to the hope that he is still alive, they have even asked neighbours and relatives to stay away for now. "We cannot accept this until we see him with our own eyes," a relative told *DH*. "The news is just words, until there is a physical identification or proof." Saketh was an exceptional student, an alumnus of IIT Madras, and a co-inventor of a patent for hyperloop cooling systems. He had been in constant touch with his family for the last six months, said another relative.



The residence of Saketh Sreenivasaiah at Srigandhada Kaval in western Bengaluru on Sunday. DH PHOTO/PUSHKAR V

Neighbours and relatives described him as a good, studious young man.

"He was very studious and a man to himself, he didn't bother others," a neighbour said. The mystery began on February 12 when he disappeared, and his backpack and laptop were later found abandoned on a doorstep near a park. While the Berkeley police are yet to confirm if the death was a suicide or a murder, Saketh's roommate, Baneet Singh, noted on a LinkedIn post that Saketh had recently become withdrawn. Singh recalled Saketh saying, "I've stopped caring, man. I don't care about anything."

However, the family remains suspicious of the circumstances. Currently, they are working with officials to secure emergency visas. MLC Arathi Krishna, who is coordinating the process, told this reporter: "The parents are in a state of shock. They want to fly out immediately to confirm the identity themselves. We are working to ensure their visas are processed by Tuesday or Wednesday."

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
GOVERNMENT OF MEGHALAYA

CORRIGENDUM

No.EDN.46/2025/67 **Dated: Shillong, the 12th February, 2026**

Reference: Public Notice **No. EDN 46/2025/31**, dated **26th March 2025**, issued by the Education Department, Government of Meghalaya.

In pursuant to the Order of the Hon'ble Supreme Court dated 09/12/2025, public notice is hereby given that the University Grants Commission (UGC) holds exclusive jurisdiction over all grievances concerning the validity of degrees and related matters. In light of the Supreme Court upholding the 2014 dissolution order, any claims regarding degree validation must strictly adhere to the directives issued in the 09/12/2025 judgment.

The issue relating to the validity of degrees awarded by CMJ University shall be examined and decided exclusively by the University Grants Commission (UGC), being the statutory regulatory authority, and all claims, objections, or grievances of students concerning such validity are to be addressed only before the UGC.

This corrigendum is issued for general information, public notice, and strict compliance by all concerned, including students, employers, and other stakeholders, and shall be read as part of all relevant earlier notifications to the extent stated herein.

Sd/-
(Shri D. Lyngdoh)
(Administrator of CMJ University, Meghalaya)
(Contact No: 0364-221 226)

MIPR No. : 2811
Dated : 13/02/2026

PUBLIC NOTICE

My client intends to purchase the residentially converted land from **Mrs. Rachana alias Rachana Ranka**, wife of Mr. Arun B. Ranka alias Arun Kumar Ranka, the owner of the property mentioned and described in the schedule hereunder. The owner represents that she has good marketable, right, title and interest to the Schedule Property and that apart from her there are no other person/s having any right or claim over the Schedule Property and she has not entered into any Agreements/ Memorandum of Understanding etc. The Owner further represents that she has not mortgaged, created any lien or encumbered the Schedule Property or any part thereof in any manner, to any person/s. Any person/s having objection/s or claims shall with documentary evidence lodge their objection(s)/claim(s) within **fifteen (15) days** from the date of this notice with the undersigned, failing which my client shall proceed with the above-mentioned transactions.

SCHEDULE

All that piece and parcel of the residentially converted land bearing Survey No. 125 (old Survey No. 80), now property bearing Katha No. 80/125 & PID No. 150200200900621009, measuring 24 acres (i.e., 97124.554 square meters), situated at Shettigere Village, Jala Hobli, Yelahanka Taluk, Bengaluru Urban District which is bounded on the:

East by : Ballari-Bengaluru NH-7 Road;
West by : Sadalli Gadi &Navarathna Agrahara Gadi;
North by : Sadalli Gadi, Property belonging to Mr. U. Nambisan and other properties; and
South by : Property belonging to Kareem Silk, Road and Private Properties.

Jayanth M Pattanshetti,
Sushanth J Pattanshetti,
Advocates,
Jayanth Pattanshetti Associates LLP
102, Ground Floor "Rams Infantry Manor", No. 70, Infantry Road, Bengaluru-560001.
Ph: 41238516 / 41238367
Place : Bengaluru
Date: 14-02-2026

Ethnographic study on 6 nomadic, semi nomadic communities

Backward Classes Welfare Dept approves project

SUJAY B M
BENGALURU, DHNS

The Backward Classes Welfare (BCW) Department has approved ethnographic studies on six nomadic and semi nomadic communities — Byragi, Darvesh, Dholi, Nathapanthi (Dauri Gosavi), Tirumali and Durga Murga (Bur Bur Cha) at a cost of Rs 60.76 lakh.

In Karnataka, nomadic communities come under three departments – Social Welfare, Scheduled Tribe Welfare and BCW. Forty-six nomadic communities are coming under the BCW.

While a government order (GO) on January 17 approved ethnographic studies about Dholi, Nathapanti, Tirumali and Durga Murga, a subsequent GO on February 10 gave the green signal to similar studies on the Byragi and Darvesh communities.

These studies will be helmed by L Srinivas of Kannada University, Hampi (Dholi, Nathapanti and Tirumali), T T Basavanagouda (Durga Murga) and Sadananda B Sugandi (Byragi and Darvesh) from Karnatak University. All three are Anthropology faculty.

These reports will be submitted to the D Devaraj Urs Research Institute, which comes under the BCW Department.

Funds allotted for study

Nomadic communities	Universities conducting studies	Amount sanctioned
Dholi, Nathapanti, Tirumali	Kannada University, Hampi	Rs 14.90 lakh
Durga Murga	Karnatak University, Dharwad	Rs 21.78 lakh
Byragi	Karnatak University, Dharwad	Rs 12.04 lakh
Darvesh	Karnatak University, Dharwad	Rs 12.04 lakh
	Total	**Rs 60.76 lakh**

DATA SOURCE: BACKWARD CLASSES WELFARE DEPARTMENT

"I have collected information through secondary data but its veracity will be ascertained through the primary data we collect. They have given us a year. We will conduct the study and submit a report before that," Sreenivas told *DH*.

The latest move is in continuation of a trend started last year, when the BCW department approved ethnographic studies into eight nomadic communities — Shikkaligar, Gopala, Baazigar, Nandiwaala – Joshi – Pulmaali, Geesadi, Haavadiga, Gaarudiga and Bailu Pattara — at a cost of Rs 1.46 crore.

A senior officer in the BCW Department told *DH* that the ethnographic studies would involve a comprehensive look into the lifestyle, food, cultural habits, socio-educational and economic status of the concerned nomadic communities.

"Once the concerned universities submit their report, the government will consider the specific recommendations made by the reports on each community."

Earlier, certain communities had sought SC or ST status based on the study and recommendations of such ethnographic studies. For instance, the Parivara/Talavara community was in Category 1 of OBC list but was later shifted to the ST list based on an ethnographic study.

However, the officer quoted earlier clarified that these studies were not intended to see whether any of the communities could be shifted over to the Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe lists.

"If that was the intention, the studies would've been under the aegis of the Ambedkar Research Institute (for inclusion to SC list) or the Karnataka State Tribal Research Institute (for inclusion to ST list) instead of D Devaraj Urs Institute."

An aerial view of the Ramanadurga forest, near Sandur, where the VISL has proposed to extract iron ore for its Bhadravathi plant. DH PHOTO/HARISHANKAR R

Bid to rejuvenate Bhadravathi's VISL plant suffers setback

Forest dept opposes plea seeking conversion of Ramanadurga forest for mining

BALLARI, DHNS

At a time when talks are underway to revive the Bhadravathi-based Visvesvaraya Iron and Steel Plant Ltd (VISL), the Forest department has opposed the conversion of the company's Ramanadurga Iron Ore Mine forest.

The Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) had submitted an application, on behalf of VISL, TO THE Centre seeking conversion of 150 acres (60.70 hectares) of forest in Ramanamalai (Ramgarh) forest block in Sandur taluk for mining purpose. The Centre had forwarded the application to the Forest department for site inspection by the project review committee.

Accordingly, the Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF) of Ballari division, who inspected the site on Sept 25, 2025 and Nov 25, 2025, recommended to the Range Conservator of Forests (RF) on December 1, 2025, to reject the SAIL proposal citing various reasons.

The forest area where the VISL proposed to take up mining is a virgin forest and rich in biodiversity. If the mining is taken up here, more than 29,000 trees will face the axe, according to the report submitted by the DCF.

The said forest area may not fall under any wildlife sanctuary or the protected area, but it is rich in flora and fauna. The Ramanadurga forest is home to leopards, bears, wolves and yellow-throated bulbul among others. It was found during the inspection that the forest is also home to over 160 species of birds, water holes, varied flora, reptiles, amphibians and insects, it is said.

The Supreme Court had capped the ore extraction in mines under Ballari district to 35 million tonnes a year in a petition submitted by Samaj Parivartana Samudaya in 2022. But the ore extraction in A and B category mines in Sandur has already crossed the ceiling fixed by the Apex Court. Hence, giving any new mining permission is not justified, the DCF stated in the recommendation made to the Centre.

On March 23, 2016, the meeting chaired by the principal chief conservator of forests (PCCF) resolved not to allow new mining permission in the virgin forests. If VISL allowed conversion of Ramanadurga forests for extraction of ore, it would be against the stand taken in the 2016 meeting, the DCF stated.

No captive mines

"The Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) is out to revive the now-defunct VISL plant. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had given his approval for the revival of Bhadravathi plant and a grant of Rs 5,000 crore will be sanctioned for the same, Union Steel Minister H D Kumaraswamy had announced in the Taralabalu Hunnime Mahotsava held recently. But the question is "With the forest department objecting to extraction of ore at Devdari and Ramanadurga How will the VISL start functioning without the captive mines?"

SC, ST ministers, Cong lawmakers to meet CM today

BENGALURU, DHNS

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah will hold a meeting on Monday with ministers and Congress legislators from the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities. Discussions are expected to revolve around the Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan and Tribal Sub-Plan (SCSP/TSP Act), for which Rs 42,018 crore was allotted in the 2025-26 Budget.

Ever since the Congress came to power in 2023, the opposition has been attacking it for "diverting" SCSP/TSP funds for guarantees.

Though the government has defended the move as legal (Section 7C of the SCSP/TSP Act that allows the government to allocate funds for general sector schemes like education, health, guarantees and so on), there have been demands from Dalit organisations and even from within Congress to only use the funds for asset creation and universal capacity building.

Dalit activists have also urged the government to provide a comprehensive report on how the scheme has helped specific Dalit communities since its implementation in 2013.

Escalation during CLP meet

The issue is said to have blown up during the recent Congress Legislature Party (CLP) meeting, where MLC Sudham Das is said to have lashed out at lacunae in the implementation of the SCSP/TSP Act.

Das is said to have argued that the three major goals of the Act - improving the Human Development Index (HDI) of SC/ST communities and bridging their gap with other communities, conducting an annual socio-economic audit and filing cases and punishing those willfully neglecting their duty - were not satisfied.

The MLC's aggressive posturing is said to have led to a meeting of SC/ST legislators of Congress and ministers, culminating in Monday's meeting.

According to sources, the SC/ST legislators and ministers are expected to have an internal meeting before meeting the chief minister in the evening.

DH has learnt that Das and Malavalli MLA P M Narendraswamy are expected to lead the charge in the meeting. Social Welfare Minister H C Mahadevappa, Home Minister G Parameshwara and Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister Priyank Kharge are also expected to attend it.

According to sources, the delegation is expected to hand over a written list of demands to the chief minister ahead of the latter's record-extending 17th Budget as finance minister.

ON A 'RAM'PAGE

Two rams lock horns in an intense battle before a packed Allamprabhu Maidan arena (Freedom Park), at a national-level ram fighting competition held as part of Marikamba fair in Sirsi, on Sunday.

BJP MLA remanded in 7-day CID custody

BENGALURU, DHNS

BJP MLA Byrathi Basavaraj was remanded in CID custody for seven days on Sunday. Officers plan to interrogate him about the murder of history-sheeter Biklu Shiva.

Following clearance from doctors at the state-run Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences, the CID officials produced the K R Pura legislator at the judge's residence in Koramangala on Sunday afternoon. After hearing the CID as well as the MLA's counsel, the judge deemed it appropriate to remand him in CID custody until 1 pm, February 21.

Earlier in the week, Basavaraj surrendered and the CID investigators executed an arrest warrant at the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) following his arrival from Ahmedabad. Earlier that day, the Supreme Court had rejected his plea for an anticipatory bail.

During a routine post-arrest medical check-up at Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital in Bengaluru, doctors sought an opinion from cardiologists at Jayadeva Hospital. Accordingly, he was kept there under observation after the court directed the CID officers to do the same and rejected their request for immediate custody.

A comprehensive set of tests was conducted on the MLA and the doctors at Jayadeva Hospital opined that he was in the clear and no further medical examination was necessary, the CID sources said. Hence, he was discharged on Sunday and was produced before the magistrate. Basavaraj has been listed as accused number 5 in the FIR related to the murder of 40-year-old Shivakumar alias Biklu Shiva.

Police notice to nine Hindu activists for attempting Shivratri puja inside Bahmani fort

KALABURAGI, DHNS: The Kalaburagi police on Sunday took BJP leader Divya Hagaragi and several others into their custody after they tried to offer puja at Swayambhu Someshwar temple inside the Bahmani fort, without taking permission from the competent authority.

The police stopped Divya Hagaragi, the key accused in the SI recruitment scam, and others, at the entrance of the fort when they tried to enter the fort to offer special puja at the Someshwara temple on the occasion of Shivaratri.

ACP Shivanagouda patil appealed to the Hindu activists that they cannot offer puja without the permission of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) official as the Bahmani fort and the temple comes under the purview of ASI..

The activists staged a flash protest on the road in front of the fort. The police took them to their custody and released them later

The police released them later before issuing notices to nine persons involved in the incident. The police also issued notice to nine activists over the incident.

Rahul's queries deserve honest response from PM Modi: CM

BENGALURU, DHNS: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said on Sunday that the concerns raised by Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on the Indo-US trade deal affecting farmers deserves a "clear and honest" response from PM Modi.

"If this deal allows unchecked GM imports, weakens safeguards, or gradually opens more crops without protection, it will directly hurt farmers across the country - including in Karnataka," Siddaramaiah said on X (formerly Twitter).

"PM @narendramodi, do not sell India's interests. Do not trade away our farmers for political compulsions. Do not surrender to foreign pressure. Our farmers are not bargaining chips. They are the lifeline of this nation," Siddaramaiah added.

The chief minister was referring to a tweet by Rahul, where the latter said: "We are witnessing a betrayal of India's farmers in the name of a US trade deal."

"Farmers deserve clarity. This is not just about today," Rahul said.

KSRTC hikes luggage charges by 15%

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) has increased the luggage charges, which will likely burden passengers already complaining about high-fares.

The KSRTC noted on Sunday that luggage fares are increased after every fare revision. "In January 2025, when the fare was hiked, luggage charges were not revised. In this background, luggage fares have been increased this year," it stated.

The revised luggage fares, which range from Rs 6 to Rs 145 per kg beyond the free allowance of 30 kg, will come into effect on February 16. The charges vary depending on the distance of commuting, charged based on stages. In KSRTC, one stage is six kilometres. The hike is about 15% from what was earlier applicable, it added.

The last time luggage charges were increased was in December 2021, it stated.

Passengers will continue to have a free luggage allowance of up to 30 kg.

Passengers can transport goods on KSRTC buses, including items such as washing machines, refrigerators, truck tyres, aluminum pipes, iron pipes, utensils, cats, dogs and rabbits, depending on available space.

The luggage transport system has been in place since November 5, 1999, with periodic revisions in charges and specifications on permitted items, according to the KSRTC.

Mukyamantri Chandru.

Mukhyamantri Chandru named chief of suppressed classes' body

▸ **BENGALURU, DHNS:** Renowned actor and activist Mukhyamatri Chandru has been chosen as the president of the recently-formed Karnataka Rajya Damanitha Hindulida Jaathigala Okkuta.

The Okkuta (Karnataka State Federation of Suppressed Backward Castes) was registered on February 9.

It has three honorary presidents, including Backward Classes Commission former member K N Lingappa. M Nagaraju and P N Sreenivasachari are the other members.

A H Prashanth is the honorary president and Backward Classes Commission former chairman C S Dwarakanath is an honorary advisor.

Speaker to attend Rahman's swearing-in

Om Birla, from Page 1

New Delhi, however, conveyed to the BNP that the prime minister would not be able to attend the ceremony as he would have to host French President Emmanuel Macron for a meeting in Mumbai on the same day.

"As neighbours united by a shared history, culture, and mutual respect, India welcomes Bangladesh's transition to an elected government under the leadership of Tarique Rahman, whose vision and values have received an overwhelming mandate of the people," MEA said in the statement.

Modi on Friday called and congratulated Rahman after his win in the elections, which were held without the participation of the Awami League, the party that had won the last four parliamentary elections in the 54-year-old nation.

Dhaka's relations with New Delhi had come under stress during Rahman's mother, Khaleda Zia's stints as prime minister of Bangladesh.

Her government had allowed the militant organisation operating in the northeastern states of India to set up camps in Bangladesh.

She had turned down New Delhi's request to Dhaka for connectivity through Bangladesh between India's landlocked northeastern states and its mainland.

The clashes between border guards of the two nations often escalated tension between the two nations. The bilateral relations returned to a positive trajectory after Sheikh Hasina's return to power in early 2009.

Tiger found dead in Kollegal dam

CHAMARAJANAGAR, DHNS: The carcass of a male tiger was found in the backwaters of Gundal reservoir, under Kollegal Wildlife range of BRT Tiger Reserve, in Chamarajanagar district on Sunday morning.

The forest department personnel found the tiger's carcass during a patrol. It is said that the big cat was around five to six years old.

According to Deputy Conservator of Forests Sripathi, "Prima facie, it looks like the tiger had got caught in a snare. It must have walked up to the reservoir to drink water and died."

The forest department has initiated a probe into the incident.

The post mortem of the tiger was conducted and cremated as per the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) guidelines. A member of NTCA, principal chief conservator of forests, a nominated representative of the chief wildlife warden and veterinary doctors were present.

DH
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OBITUARY

M. I JOSEPH
(16.3.1954 - 14.2.2026)
Passed away peacefully on Saturday, February 14. Husband of Beena Joseph
Funeral service : Monday, February 16, 2026, 3.00 p.m. at Our Lady of The Sacred Heart Church, Bangalore.
The Moriyadan House
MD Francis & Sons
Joe Joseph - 9632166022

DH Classifieds

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Kerala govt in tight spot as SC revisits Sabarimala women's entry ban

Left faces pressure on its stand ahead of Assembly elections

ARJUN RAGHUNATH
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHNS

With the Supreme Court scheduled to hear the Sabarimala women's entry case on Monday, the CPM-led Left Democratic Front government in Kerala is under pressure to clarify its stand on lifting the ban on women aged 10-50 from entering the hill shrine.

The Congress and the Nair Service Society (NSS), a key forum of the Hindu Nair community, have asked the government whether it will revise its earlier position in support of lifting the ban. CPM leaders have so far avoided giving a direct reply, choosing instead to buy time.

The Left Front government is already on the defensive over the Sabarimala Ayyappa temple gold heist and alleged fund misappropriation linked to the Global Ayyappa Sangamam — controversies surfacing just as Assembly polls approach in the state.

Kerala witnessed strong protests in 2018 after the Pinarayi Vijayan government tried to implement the SC order allowing women of all ages to enter the Sabarimala temple. On January 2, 2019, Bindu Ammini and Kanakadurga became the first women to enter the hill shrine with police protection, amid violent resistance from BJP and Sangh Parivar outfits.

TEMPLE DILEMMA

- SC to hear Sabarimala women's entry case today
- Left govt under pressure to clarify stand on lifting ban for women aged 10-50
- Cong, NSS demand clarity on whether govt will revise pro-entry position
- Govt already on defensive over temple gold heist row

The episode was a political setback for the Left Front, which had backed lifting the ban on women aged 10-50 from entering the temple. The SC later referred a set of review petitions to a seven-judge bench, and the ban continues.

NSS general secretary G Sukumaran Nair has expressed hope that the Left Front government will "correct" its earlier stand before the court, while Congress legislature party leader VD Satheesan has asked the chief minister to clarify the government's position.

"The government should clarify whether it will file a fresh affidavit in the SC, changing its earlier stand in favour of allowing women of all ages into the temple or not. There needs to be clarity," Satheesan said.

The Congress has maintained that religious beliefs must be protected.

CPM state secretary MV Govindan and state law minister P Rajeev avoided giving a direct reply on whether the government would revise its position before the apex court.

"We will go by the court's directives. Earlier, the court ordered that women of all ages should be allowed entry, and the government implemented that," said Govindan.

Rajeev said that it was for the SC to decide whether the state's opinion was required in the matter. "If such a situation arises, the government will convey its stand," he said.

Women aged 10-50 (considered the menstruating age group) are barred from entering the temple based on the belief that Lord Ayyappa is a Naishtika Brahmachari (celibate).

Former minister Siddiqui, over 15k join SP ahead of 2027 UP polls

LUCKNOW, PTI: Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday said the relationship between the "Bahujan Samaj" and his organisation was growing stronger, as over 15,000 people from various parties, including former minister Naseemuddin Siddiqui, joined the political outfit at a function.

Addressing what he called a "PDA" (Prem Prasar Samaroh) — echoing the party's plank of Pichda, Dalit and Alpsankhyak — Yadav said the pre-Holi event would foster brotherhood and cooperation.

Among those who joined were former ministers Naseemuddin Siddiqui and Anees Ahmad Khan alias Phool Babu, and former Apna Dal (Soneylal) MLA Rajkumar Pal.

Siddiqui, once a close aide of Mayawati, served four terms as a minister in her government before being expelled from the BSP in 2017 for alleged anti-party activities.

He joined the Congress in 2018, merging his Rashtriya Bahujan Morcha with it, but quit the party in January.

Until his expulsion in May 2017 from the BSP, Siddiqui, along with his son Afzal, was widely regarded as the party's prominent Muslim face.

Hailing from Banda in the Bundelkhand region, he had played a key organisational and electoral role for the party in the state for years.

Stalin 'puppet leader' who speaks only lies: AIADMK chief

ERODE, PTI: AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami on Sunday launched a sharp attack on Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, calling him a "puppet leader" heading a government driven by "advertisements and lies" rather than performance.

"In the history of Tamil Nadu, if there is one chief minister who lacks administrative ability, lacks basic knowledge, speaks only loud lies, and runs a government relying solely on advertisements, it is this puppet Chief Minister Stalin," the Leader of the Opposition said.

"Every day he announces a new name for a scheme and poses for a photo shoot; that's where it ends," he added.

Palaniswami also rejected the DMK's charge that the AIADMK is a "slave" to the BJP.

"AIADMK is a party that stands on its own feet — a party of hard workers and a battalion of youth. As far as AIADMK is concerned, it is a slave to no one and functions independently," he said.

Aiyar's praise for CM Pinarayi puts Congress in a spot

Party says he speaks in personal capacity as remarks roil Kerala poll narrative

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/ NEW DELHI, DHNS

Pinarayi Vijayan

Mani Shankar Aiyar

Senior Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar has said he is sure that Pinarayi Vijayan will become the Kerala chief minister again.

Speaking at the "Vision 2031: International conference on development and democracy", organised by the Kerala state planning board in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday, Aiyar said Kerala was India's leader in Panchayati Raj. He also flayed the absence of Congress leaders at the event.

Congress Media and Publicity Department Chairman Pawan Khera said Aiyar "has had no connection whatsoever" with the Congress for the past few years. "He speaks and writes purely in his personal capacity," he said on 'X'.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh tagged Khera's post on X and asserted that the people of Kerala will bring the UDF back for more responsible and responsive governance.

"Let there be no doubt. The people of Kerala will bring the UDF back for more responsible and responsive governance. They also know LDF and BJP are covert partners," Ramesh said on X.

Senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala earlier urged Aiyar and other eminent personalities, like Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, to stay away from the conference, claiming that it was a pre-election promotional event.

Aiyar's praise for Pinarayi and his remark that the CPM leader would retain power were an embarrassment to the Congress in the run-up to the Kerala Assembly polls.

It was while praising the implementation of Panchayati Raj that the former Union minister said he was sure that Pinarayi would be the next CM.

"I'm afraid there is no champion for Panchayati Raj left in the country. Therefore, I have to fall at your feet, Pinarayi Vijayan, and say, please, sir, pick up the baton that the Congress has dropped," he said.

"Kerala is India's leader in Panchayati Raj. The state is ironically achieving more than anyone else based on the expectations of [late Congress leader and former prime minister] Rajiv Gandhi. The only state that attained progress in Mahatma Gandhi's direction of the poor having a voice in the nation's development is the one ruled by the Marxist-Leninist party of India.

I quite regret the absence of my party colleagues on this occasion," said Aiyar, a former Union minister for Panchayati Raj.

Citing Karnataka's outstanding contemporary legislation on Panchayati Raj, he suggested that Kerala also amend the laws based on practical knowledge.

The three-day seminar, titled "Vision 2031: Development and Democracy", was the culmination of a series of consultations held across the state to gather people's opinions on Kerala's development.

(With PTI inputs)

Chaos in the skies: Dec 2025

Airline	Flights cancelled	Passengers affected
Alliance Air	63	2,463
Air India Group	924	43,278
Akasa Air	39	5,673
IndiGo	5,689	9,02,384
SpiceJet	79	11,929
Fly91	8	343
IndiaOne Air	71	408
Star Air	17	386
Total	6,890	9,66,864

IndiGo: Primary causes of disruption were over-optimisation of operations, inadequate regulatory preparedness, deficiencies in system software support and shortcomings in management structure and operational control

A considerable number of flights were cancelled due to adverse weather conditions

(Source: Response by the Ministry of Civil Aviation to questions raised by KC Venugopal and R Sudha in the Lok Sabha)

India's first cow culture museum to open in UP's Mathura

MATHURA (UP), PTI: On the initiative of the Uttar Pradesh Braj Teerth Vikas Parishad, the country's first national cow culture museum will be established on Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Veterinary Science University campus in Mathura, an official announced, adding that the land for the project has been selected.

Agra Divisional Commissioner Nagendra Pratap noted that the museum will convey the religious, cultural, and spiritual significance of cattle, as well as the scientific utility of cows and their products to the general public. This unique confluence of tradition and science will foster a holistic understanding of cow conservation, he said.

The divisional commissioner said that the museum will display approximately 100 digital and symbolic models of cattle. This will include all major cattle breeds found in the country, as well as endangered species, to provide future generations with a comprehensive understanding of India's rich cow heritage.

Modi urges pvt sector to...

Modi, from Page 1

The PM stressed that the benefits of higher productivity must be widely shared to ensure durable and socially-legitimate growth.

"Equally, as productivity rises, the gains must be shared fairly between workers, shareholders and owner-managers. Sustainable growth requires social legitimacy. Rising real wages, skill upgrading and stable employment reinforce domestic demand and social cohesion, which, in turn, support long-term investment."

He listed 3 top priorities for the next three decades — more structural reforms, deepening of innovation in technology, manufacturing and services, and simpler governance so that citizens and businesses can operate with greater ease and trust.

"The next leap toward Viksit Bharat by 2047 will depend on how boldly Indian enterprise invests in innovation, builds long-term capacity and positions itself as a globally-competitive, technologically-confident and socially-responsible engine of growth," he said.

With regards to the defence sector, Modi said the benefits of a decade of reforms were evident during Operation Sindoor, even as he asserted that India has to be prepared at all times to deal with security challenges.

As a country that is playing an increasingly important role in the world, India has a duty to modernise its defence sector in line with current realities, Modi said.

Citing the allocation of Rs 7.85 lakh crore to the defence sector in the Union Budget 2026-27, the PM said the outlay is 15% higher than the previous budget and is also the "biggest chunk" given to any ministry or department.

Since day one, the government has been clear — it will do whatever it takes to support the country's defence forces and strengthen them, he said.

Wildlife board approved power project in Sharavathi valley, documents show

Activists fume over green clearance in critical area

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

The Karnataka Power Corporation Limited has sought 131.81 acres of forest in the valley to build a 2,000 MW power house in Sharavathi valley.

The "in-principle" approval to establish a pumped storage project in the Sharavathi Valley Lion Tailed Macaque Sanctuary issued by the standing committee of the National Board of Wildlife (NBWL) has turned into a "full" approval behind the scenes, activists said, pointing to documents accessed under the Right to Information Act.

The Karnataka Power Corporation Limited has sought 131.81 acres of forest in the valley to build a 2000 MW power house. The project has seen widespread opposition across the district with thousands saying 'no' in the public hearing in September 2025.

In its meeting on June 26, 2025, the NBWL standing committee had indicated that the clearance was tentative. "After discussions, the standing committee decided to recommend the proposal in-principle with the following conditions," the minutes of the meeting noted, laying down a set of 28 conditions.

A month later, however, the Centre had removed the "in-principle" clause. In a letter dated July 17, 2025, the wildlife wing of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) wrote to the state government communicating that the project has been cleared. "After discussions, the standing committee of the NBWL decided to recommend/approve the proposal subject to the following conditions," it said, copying the conditions from the minutes.

Why it matters?

Turning what was publicly described as a tentative clearance into a final approval has ramifications in the procedure followed by the expert committee of the MoEF&CC in clearing mega projects proposed in highly critical areas.

Notably, the Forest Advisory Committee, whose clearance is mandatory before taking up the project, has been waiting for the stance of the NBWL.

Chikkamagaluru-based wildlife activist Veeresh G said the government has misled the people. "The Wildlife (Protection) Act doesn't allow such projects even in the eco-sensitive zones of the sanctuaries, let alone its core area. Yet the NBWL misled the public by using the words 'in-principle'. We are now finding out that the approval was final," he said.

VEERESH G
Wildlife activist

"The Wildlife (Protection) Act doesn't allow such projects even in the eco-sensitive zones of the sanctuaries, let alone its core area. Yet the NBWL misled the public by using the words 'in-principle'. We are now finding out that the approval was final.

Veeresh further noted that the minutes of the meeting are supposed to provide details of deliberations in a transparent manner. "The development shows that when it comes to processing the projects of big companies, many things happen without any explanation," he said.

The proposal has come under scrutiny after two members of the NBWL sought a site inspection. Both the wildlife and forest expert committees are awaiting the report of the inspection.

India AI Impact Summit begins...

AI Impact, from Page 1

There will be sessions on 'future of employability in the age of AI', 'effective AI assessments, verification and assurance', 'establishing the foundations for responsible AI', and 'building a future-ready workforce in the age of AI', among others.

The India AI Impact Expo 2026 will be held on the sidelines of the summit, where organisations will display their latest AI solutions. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the expo on Monday evening. The summit aims to ensure that AI serves as a catalyst for inclusive human development, environmental sustainability and equitable progress worldwide.

The event will be anchored on three foundational pillars, known as Sutras — people, planet and progress.

While the People Sutra envisions AI as a force for human progress, respecting cultural diversity, preserving dignity and ensuring inclusion in its design and deployment, the Planet Sutra calls for AI to advance innovation responsibly. The Progress Sutra envisages AI as an engine for inclusive growth, aligning its benefits with global development priorities and equitable access to opportunity.

The deliberations at the summit will be organised around seven interconnected Chakras: human capital; inclusion for social empowerment; safe and trusted AI; resilience, innovation and efficiency; science; democratising AI resources, and AI for economic growth and social good.

Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw recently said that AI will power the Fifth Industrial Revolution, with a focus on societal impact, adoption and governance.

During the summit, Deloitte India will launch GenW.AI, an indigenous, next-generation low-code platform created to enable enterprises to rapidly prototype and deploy diverse applications and AI agents. It is designed to integrate with a wide range of large language models (LLMs). GenW.AI will be officially launched at the India AI Impact Summit.

Also, the national finale of GenAI Innovation Challenge-OpenAI Academy X NxtWave Buildathon will be held on February 17. The buildathon is a key initiative aligned with the IndiaAI Mission, taking AI learning and innovation to students from Tier-2 and 3 cities. Over 300 students from across India have qualified for the national finale, where they will get the opportunity to pitch their ideas on a global stage.

Meanwhile, Airtel has strengthened its network infrastructure to deliver high-speed connectivity for the summit.

India, France dialogue to boost defence ties...

Defence, from Page 1

Prime Minister Modi was the Guest of Honour at the Bastille Day Parade in July 2023, before the French President graced the Republic Day Parade 2024 as the Chief Guest.

At the Rajnath-Catherine meeting, an announcement is also expected on the reciprocal deployment of officers at the Indian Army and French Land Forces establishments.

Moreover, the two ministers will witness the inauguration of the Tata-Airbus final assembly line for Airbus H125 helicopters at Vemagal. This will be India's first private helicopter manufacturing unit, which is expected to roll out the first chopper in 2027.

The made-in-India H125 helicopter will not only be pitched for markets in India and other Asian nations, it may also meet the Indian armed forces' requirement for a light multi-role helicopter, especially on the Himalayan frontiers.

The two companies have plans to manufacture a military version, the H125M, with high levels of indigenous components and technologies, that can participate in helicopter tenders when floated by the armed forces.

At Aero India 2025, BEL and Safran Electronics and Defence signed a 50:50 joint venture for the production of the Highly Agile Modular Munition Extended Range (HAMMER) smart precision-guided air-to-ground weapon system in India. The February 17 MoU is likely to take the collaboration forward.

India and France have a long-standing defence relationship, marked by the purchase of Dassault Ouragan (Toofani) and Mystere aircraft for the IAF in the 1950s, and the Alouette Light Helicopter (Chetak) since the 1960s for the armed forces.

Over the years, Paris has emerged as a trusted supplier of military hardware, ranging from Mirage-2000 and Rafale combat jets, Scorpene submarines, Alize anti-submarine aircraft, Milan anti tank missiles, air surveillance radar and engines for Dhruv advanced light weight helicopters, manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited.

Earlier this week, the Defence Ministry gave a green signal to a mega defence deal of buying 114 Rafale aircraft in a Rs 3.25 lakh crore deal. New Delhi and Paris are also finalising another major contract to manufacture the engines of fifth generation fighter aircraft in India.

The armed forces of India and France have been regularly carrying out three major wargames - Exercise Shakti involving the land forces, Exercise Varuna between the two navies and Exercise Garuda between the two air forces.

To further consolidate the defence relationship, the two countries in March 2018 agreed to create an annual defence dialogue at the ministerial level.

The recent India-EU Security & Defence Partnership marks a significant step in deepening collective engagement with European nations and Military-to-Military cooperation is on the increase.

Devotee dies of heart attack at Gokarna temple

GOKARNA (UTTARA KANNADA), DHNS: A devotee visiting the famed Mahabaleshwara Temple in Gokarna succumbed to heart attack on the temple premises on Sunday.

Ratnakar Yeshwant Borker (72), a native of north Goa, is the deceased.

Ratnakar had come to Gokarna to take darshan of Atmalinga on the occasion of Shivaratri.

He was returning after taking darshan when he collapsed.

Borker was rushed to a hospital nearby, where doctors declared him dead. He had undergone a heart-related surgery a few days back, police said.

◆ WEATHER ◆

Overview: Dry weather prevailed over the State.

Forecast Feb 16: Mainly clear sky. Mist very likely during early morning hours in some areas.

INTERIOR NORTH

Stations	Max	Min	Rain
Belagavi	31.2	14.0	0.0
Bidar	31.0	14.2	0.0
Vijayapura	31.8	14.5	0.0
Dharwad	31.8	13.6	0.0
Haveri	32.4	13.6	0.0
Kalaburagi	34.8	18.6	0.0
Raichur	32.6	16.6	0.0
COASTAL			
Honnavar	36.8	18.4	0.0
Karwar	37.6	19.4	0.0
Shirali	NA	NA	NA
Mangaluru	33.8	23.0	0.0

INTERIOR SOUTH

Stations	Max	Min	Rain
Agumbe	NA	NA	0.0
Bengaluru	31.4	17.6	0.0
Ballari	35.5	20.4	NA
Chamarajanagar	--	--	--
Chikkamagaluru	--	--	--
Chitradurga	31.7	15.6	0.0
Davangere	32.0	11.5	0.0
Hassan	31.3	12.1	0.0
Mysuru	32.2	15.4	0.0
Madikeri	--	--	--
Kolar	31.4	12.6	0.0
OTHER STATIONS			
New Delhi	28.0	13.0	NIL
Kolkata	29.0	16.0	NIL
Mumbai	29.0	23.0	NA
Chennai	29.0	22.0	NA
Pune	32.0	18.0	NA
Hyderabad	31.0	18.0	NA
Th'puram	29.0	23.0	NIL

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ESTABLISHED 1948

Crack the whip on Himanta Sarma

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma beats most other Hindutva leaders when it comes to rabid hate speech against Muslims. Ever since he became the chief minister in 2021, he has spewed venom and malice against Muslims, adopted discriminatory policies, and initiated actions to harass and persecute them. His latest pronouncements and actions are most objectionable. Some parties and individuals have petitioned the Supreme Court against some of his latest pronouncements. They have told the court about a video showing an image of Sarma firing at men wearing skull caps, with the caption reading "point blank shot." It was deleted later but circulated widely in Assam and across the country. He gave an open call to target Miyas, a name given to Bengali-speaking Muslims, in the ongoing electoral rolls revision in the state. He has promised government protection to people who discriminate against Muslims and even harass them.

Assembly elections are due in Assam soon and the BJP is aiming to win a third straight term. Sarma's tirade against the Muslims may have an electoral dimension, but it cannot be taken solely as part of the election campaign. His rhetoric is most divisive and his speech easily falls into the category of hate speech. Sarma has claimed that his speech is only against illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, but in practical terms, there is no such distinction, and it is aimed at all Muslims. A ruler who aims a gun at citizens and resorts to such communal dog whistling violates his oath of office, and all canons of decent politics, decorum and decency.

Assam chief minister crosses all red lines in speech and action

For decades, Sarma and the BJP have raised the issue of illegal immigration from Bangladesh as a political and electoral issue. Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke of infiltrators during his visit to Assam on Saturday. The BJP has been in power at the Centre and in Assam for 10 years and they had the opportunity and the responsibility to resolve the problem in legal and established ways. The Assam Accord of 1985 and subsequent Supreme Court rulings can guide them in this matter. But demonising and vilifying all Muslims is no solution. Sarma is a late entrant to the BJP from the Congress and he is trying to prove with a vengeance that he is a bigger Hindutva fanatic than others. He is doing immense harm to the social fabric and politics of the country. He has crossed all red lines, and should not be allowed to get away with his violations.

Questions loom as IPL returns to B'luru

The Karnataka government's conditional approval for the resumption of Indian Premier League (IPL) matches at the KSCA-run M Chinnaswamy Stadium has been greeted with predictable jubilation by supporters of Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB). For a franchise defending its maiden title, and for a city starved of marquee cricket over the past year, the return feels like normalcy being restored. But Bengaluru is not returning to a blank slate. The shadow of June 2025 still hangs heavy over the stadium gates. The stampede, triggered during a chaotic RCB celebration, killed 11 fans and exposed a catastrophic collapse of planning, policing and accountability. The government's decision to allow matches now—albeit with conditions tied to safety reforms—raises an uncomfortable question: has the system truly learnt its lessons, or has it merely moved on?

Multiple investigations ordered by the government spoke with unusual bluntness. A judicial commission headed by Justice Michael D'Cunha and a Criminal Investigation Department (CID) probe fixed primary responsibility on the RCB franchise, event managers DNA Entertainment, and the Karnataka State Cricket Association. The event was declared illegal, organised without police permission, and amplified by reckless social media announcements that drew nearly four lakh people into an area never designed to hold them. Senior police officers were also indicted for failing to prevent an unauthorised gathering they knew was unfolding without safeguards. Yet the arc from outrage to outcome has been depressingly familiar. Suspended police officers have been reinstated, criminal cases against organisers remain mired in litigation, with charge sheets stalled and key executives out on bail. No real action followed. Perhaps most telling is the silence surrounding the political establishment, which patronised the "illegal" celebration but escaped the purview of every probe.

Has the system learnt its lessons from the 2025 stampede that claimed 11 lives?

This is the uneasy context in which cricket returns to the stadium. The government insists that this time is different: tighter ticketing, capped attendance, infrastructural upgrades, and a new crowd-control law that promises harsh penalties for violations. On paper, these measures are overdue and necessary. But they also underline a troubling truth. The state has focused on preventing the next disaster without conclusively accounting for the last one. If the resumption of matches becomes merely another chapter of "business as usual", Bengaluru risks sending a dangerous message: that lives lost to administrative failure can be absorbed, settled, and ultimately forgotten. The real test of the government's conditional approval will not be whether the stands are full or the matches are incident-free, but whether accountability has finally caught up with the powerful and the protected.

THREAT OF DATA COLONISATION

India's AI crossroads: Lead or serve?

Rahul Gandhi's political charge underlines the need to prioritise data sovereignty and domestic research

ASHUTOSH KUMAR THAKUR

The machine has arrived. It does not knock. It hums. It predicts. It writes. Artificial Intelligence is no longer a seminar-room abstraction. It is here, reshaping work, capital and sovereignty, carrying both promise and peril.

Against this backdrop, Rahul Gandhi warned in Parliament that India risks becoming a "data colony" if it fails to assert control over the digital resources that will define the AI century. The phrase was political, but strategic. It framed AI not merely as technological change, but as national leverage.

India, he suggested, stands at a crossroads: shape the AI future on its own terms or cede control of a vital resource. The rhetoric may be partisan. The questions are not.

For more than three decades, India's IT and services sector has been a constant in an uneven economic story. From Bengaluru to Hyderabad, Gurugram to Pune, millions entered the global middle class through software and outsourcing. It was a convergence of talent, timing, and demand.

Gandhi's warning draws urgency from this reality. AI is not simply the next upgrade in the services chain. It is automation at scale, writing code, drafting contracts, analysing diagnostics and handling customer service.

Much of India's IT growth has relied on repetitive, service-driven segments. Industry leaders acknowledge disruption ahead, emphasising reskilling and productivity gains.

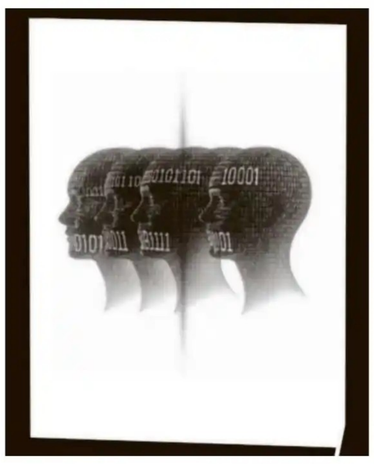
The structural question remains. What happens to large entry-level workforces when automation moves upstream? When Gandhi speaks of a coming storm, he points to this churn. The anxiety is not about technology alone, but employment architecture.

"Data is the petrol which fuels the AI engine," Gandhi said in Parliament. The metaphor invites scrutiny. Petroleum can be taxed and regulated within borders. Data is more elusive, generated through searches, transactions and speech, turning behaviour into economic input. India has over 800 million internet users and a vast digital payment ecosystem. Every UPI transaction and online interaction feeds the data economy.

Gandhi's "data colony" phrase highlights a structural asymmetry. Much of India's digital ecosystem is mediated by multinational platforms such as Meta, Google, and Amazon, which process vast behavioural data. The algorithms analysing it are largely governed outside India.

The core question is not ownership alone, but regulatory leverage. Who sets the terms for storage and processing?

Gandhi's intervention came amid discussions on digital trade commitments, particularly negotiations involving cross-border data flows and regulatory barriers. Critics argue that expansive commitments favouring unrestricted data movement could narrow India's policy space, including its ability to enforce localisation norms or impose digital taxes. Supporters counter that



open flows are essential for innovation and integration.

India has taken a cautious approach in multilateral forums on e-commerce rules, seeking regulatory flexibility. Its data protection framework reflects calibrated localisation rather than blanket restrictions.

This is not a simple story of capitulation, but a negotiation between openness and autonomy. Gandhi's warning underscores a tension: if regulatory space narrows too soon, India's leverage over data governance may erode.

Three policy axes shape this debate: storage, transparency, and taxation. Data localisation concerns jurisdiction. If data resides outside India, enforcement becomes complex, with questions of breach and compliance extending beyond courts. Algorithmic transparency raises democratic concerns. Though source codes are proprietary, algorithms influence elections, credit decisions, and content visibility. Democracies are still grappling with how to regulate such opaque systems.

Taxation is another contested frontier. India has experimented with digital levies to capture value generated by multinational platforms, sometimes triggering diplomatic friction. Balancing fiscal sovereignty with trade commitments remains delicate. Gandhi's speech compressed these themes into a political charge. The policy debate beneath them is complex and ongoing.

Signals from the summit

India is poised to host a major AI summit, projecting itself as a serious player in the emerging global ecosystem. Such platforms signal ambition and attract capital and partnerships. India has shown that sovereign digital infrastructure is possible. Aadhaar and UPI demonstrate scale combined with state-backed architecture.

The question Gandhi's warning implicitly poses is whether AI strategy will prioritise domestic research depth, compute capacity, and semiconductor ecosystems, or rely largely on adapting foreign foundational models.

India has talent, market size, and digital public rails. What it still lacks is deep computational sovereignty and sustained research investment at a global scale.

It is tempting to read Gandhi's intervention solely as opposition critique. But AI governance will outlast governments. China is building State-backed AI ecosystems. The European Union is crafting regulatory regimes. The United States dominates model development and advanced chip design. India must define its posture. Will it remain largely a services economy recalibrated for AI maintenance? Will it align with Western digital capitalism? Or attempt a hybrid path balancing integration with autonomy?

These are not rhetorical questions. They demand coordinated action across education, trade, research, and industry policy.

At the heart of the "data colony" warning lies a philosophical concern. When behavioural patterns become training data, citizens risk being reduced to inputs in machine systems. Search histories and consumption habits acquire economic value. The boundary between person and resource blurs. Who safeguards that boundary? Parliament? Regulators? Courts? Corporations?

India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act establishes a framework. Its enforcement will determine whether data dignity can coexist with technological ambition. Rahul Gandhi's warning surfaces a larger national question. Will India define the rules under which its data fuels the AI age, or adapt to rules written elsewhere?

The machine is learning quickly. Whether the republic matches that pace will determine whether the phrase remains metaphor or becomes reality.

(The author writes on society, literature, and the arts, reflecting on the shared histories and cultures of South Asia)

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

A hop, skip and jump at the wheel

A road trip to Udupi turned into a comic obstacle course

SANDHYA VASUDEV

I wonder how each driving experience of mine on Indian roads turns into a story. Compare this with the fast and smooth road journeys of Europe or the US, and the latter seems monotonous! The likeliest of the happenings over there is a crash, given the steep speed levels. But as a sane driver here can never drive fast with the natural speed breakers – the cows and dogs – lounging on the road in stoic resilience, collisions on Indian roads are more due to recklessness or falling asleep at the wheel.

Coming to my tale, our new car was getting stiff-legged, I mean stiff-tyred, from being stationed indefinitely, as we were wont to use our 15-year-old veteran on the potholed and congested roads of "smart city" Hubballi. So a road trip to coastal Udupi was specially planned to appease the new wheeled entrant to our family. But one wrong turn at a junction and the confused GPS took us along the congested Diwali market areas, and the car, my husband and I heaved sighs of relief as we finally hit the highway. I happily pressed the accelerator to give the newbie the fast-paced zing that she badly needed.

All of a sudden I saw a smaller car that had raced past do a jump in the air and come to a near standstill. By reflex I pressed the brake, and the open baskets on the rear seat fell forward, distributing their goodies on the floor of the car. But at least we avoided the ditch that had thrown up the smaller car. I realised that the highway had become a roller coaster ride after the heavy monsoons, and I heard the car groan with disappointment that she would not be able to race along.

The next two hours alternated between the accelerator and the brake, each vying to take over. I felt grateful for the gearless beauty that saved me additional strain. It turned into a game as to whether my husband or I would spot the deep potholes first. We saw vehicles in the opposite direction directly and dangerously in our lane as they tried to dodge pits on their path, forgetting to look ahead. It was indeed comical to see a huge bus driving in a zigzag manner to avoid the deep potholes, even as I took care to maintain a safe distance from it.

As we continued our hop, skip and jump driving, we beheld a sight that had us in splits. A heavily laden mini truck was moving shakily in front of us with the entire tarpaulin-covered load tilted to a side, reminding us of a famous yesteryear actor who had a peculiar style of walking with his head nodding at an angle. All said and done, the new car and the occupants are in no hurry for another monsoon-hit highway drive.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bangladesh election results a mixed bag for India

The BNP, led by Tarique Rahman, has won a decisive victory, securing a two-thirds majority in the parliamentary polls in Bangladesh. While it is a matter of some relief that the radical Islamist, pro-Pakistan Jamaat-e-Islami did not come to power, its winning over 70 seats is a cause for concern, especially its strong performance in areas bordering India's North-Eastern states. Immediately after winning the elections, Tarique Rahman demanded that Sheikh Hasina, the former PM of Bangladesh, who has sought asylum in India, be extradited to face trial for alleged misuse of power. India cannot meet this demand, which could become a point of friction between the two countries.The future of relations between the two will depend, among other things, on how the new regime in Bangladesh ensures the protection of the lives, properties, and places of worship of minorities, which were jeopardised following Sheikh Hasina's exit.
K R Jayaprakash Rao, Mysuru

PM must introspect

The Prime Minister's statement in Assam that the Congress party has become poisonous after being out of power for over ten years is more applicable to his own party. Th BJP has been in power for over a decade and has become aggressive, pursuing a divisive agenda and politics of polarisation, as seen in BJP-ruled states, particularly UP and Assam. He should urge his party members to be more tolerant towards others, especially minorities, who are also citizens of this country, and stop lecturing others in such a cavalier fashion.
V Padmanabhan, Bengaluru

Tune up the tech

I refer to 'Amid tech push, big drop in traffic cases tracked by cameras' (Feb 15). The dip in traffic cases detected by camera-based enforcement in Bengaluru exposes the technological and operational limits of surveillance systems rather than improved compliance. Faulty sensors, patchy coverage, and poor calibration weaken deterrence and distort enforcement data. The inefficiency of technology-driven traffic signals is also troubling. Rigid cycles ignore real-time demand.
N Sadhasiva Reddy, Bengaluru

Our readers are welcome to email letters to: **letters@deccanherald.co.in** (only letters emailed – not handwritten – will be accepted). All letters must carry the sender's postal address and phone number.

SPEAK OUT

Governance is not about speeches and slogans, it is about responsibility.
R Ashoka, Karnataka LoP and BJP MLA

We have in fact, two kinds of morality, side by side: one which we preach, but do not practice, and another which we practice, but seldom preach.
Bertrand Russell

TO BE PRECISE

IN PERSPECTIVE

As BNP rises, India faces a new Dhaka

India and Bangladesh are moving from a special relationship to sovereign parity

K S TOMAR

History rarely repeats itself in straight lines; it returns in echoes. In 2009, Sheikh Hasina presided over a political order in which the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) found itself cornered and excluded from meaningful electoral competition. In 2026, the echo is unmistakable. The BNP, led by Tarique Rahman, rises to power while the Awami League remains barred from the contest it once dominated. The actors have changed places; the script of exclusion feels familiar. Yet Bangladesh today is more economically integrated, demographically youthful and geopolitically consequential than it was 15 years ago.

The first test of the new government will therefore be external: how it redefines relations with India without unsettling the hard realities of geography, commerce and security interdependence. A notable subplot of this election has been the underperformance and fragmentation of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami and allied hardline platforms, which were expected to ride the post-Hasina churn. Their stumble, and subsequent questioning of the polls' authenticity, is quietly reassuring for New Delhi. Over the past year, such elements had amplified anti-India rhetoric and pressed the interim establishment towards sharper postures. Their setback reduces the leverage of maximalist narratives and creates space for a pragmatic reset in Dhaka's external engagement.

Even so, cautionary undercurrents persist. The BNP's historical discomfort with India, dating back to the nationalist idiom shaped under Ziaur Rahman, often positioned New Delhi as an overbearing neighbour. While pragmatic engagement occurred at various junctures, rhetoric on water sharing, transit, border management and trade asymmetries was sharper during earlier BNP tenures. Whether recent moderation represents durable doctrine or campaign restraint will determine the tenor of ties.

A second concern lies in external balancing. China has expanded its infrastructure footprint in Bangladesh through ports, power projects and connectivity corridors under the Belt and Road Initiative. A BNP government keen to signal strategic autonomy may deepen this engagement to diversify leverage. Symbolic outreach to Pakistan, despite the historical baggage of 1971, cannot be ruled out as Dhaka broadens options. For India, the calculus will be to respect sovereign choices while ensuring that connectivity and security architectures in the Bay of Bengal are not diluted.

The legacy of BNP's earlier alliance with Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami also lingers. During the 2001-2006 coalition, Jamaat held cabinet positions, a period critics associate with rising Islamist assertiveness and attacks on minorities. Even if its parliamentary strength is limited today, its grassroots networks retain mobilisation capacity. The challenge for the BNP will be to demonstrate that coalition compulsions will not override commitments to pluralism and internal security.

Border security will be a litmus test. Under Hasina, India-Bangladesh cooperation reached unprecedented levels; coordinated operations curbed insurgent sanctuaries affecting India's Northeast, and intelligence sharing deepened. Memories of earlier phases, when Indian agencies expressed concern about insurgent refuge across the frontier, still shape New Delhi's strategic community. Sustaining robust coordination along the 4,000-kilometre frontier is too critical to become hostage to political recalibration.

The charged debate over Hasina's legacy further complicates the transition. Once credited with economic growth and counter-terror consolidation, she now faces accusations of authoritarian excess, while supporters defend strong measures as necessary for stability. If accountability turns vengeful rather than procedural, it risks deepening fault lines; if transparent and lawful, it could reinforce democratic norms. For India, which enjoyed close working relations with her administration, navigating this churn without appearing partisan will require calibrated diplomacy.

The poor showing of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami carries historical resonance. In 1971, its ideological predecessors opposed liberation, and auxiliaries such as Al-Badr and Al-Shams aided Pakistani forces in atrocities. A stronger mandate for such a formation would have revived old anxieties along India's eastern frontier.

Against this backdrop, Jamaat's setback opens diplomatic room for calibrated engagement with the BNP leadership. Tarique Rahman's articulation of a 'Bangladesh First' approach suggests pragmatism without perceived subservience. Transit, connectivity and trade can be framed as economic decisions serving Bangladeshi interests rather than concessions. The victory of Hindu candidates on BNP tickets in Muslim-majority constituencies has symbolic weight beyond arithmetic, signalling a claim to equal citizenship and constitutional protection. With minorities forming nearly 8% of the population, their confidence in a BNP-led dispensation will be an early test of credibility.

The Hasina years produced strategic comfort between Delhi and Dhaka; a BNP government is unlikely to dismantle that architecture but will recast the vocabulary from "special relationship" to "sovereign parity". For India, the shift demands adaptation from comfort to competitiveness. For Bangladesh, it signals a search for balance, leverage and visible sovereignty anchored in stability at home and equilibrium abroad.

(The writer is strategic affairs columnist and senior political analyst based in Shimla)

Deep deals, deeper strategy: India's bilateral dynamism and trade diplomacy

PIYALI MAJUMDER, RAKTIMAVA BOSE AND SANJIB POHIT

The proliferation of trade deals in 2025, amid rising geopolitical tensions, is an attempt to recalibrate India's strategic diplomacy with its trade partners. The path-dependency component adds deeper significance to the strategic agreement of the India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). While the India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) strengthens India's position in the Asia-Pacific, the India-Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) deepens economic ties with the Middle East.

These agreements go well beyond tariff liberalisation. Economic integration is accentuated through negotiations on service trade and cross-border mobility of professionals, non-tariff measures (SPS and TBT), investment treaties, and other WTO-plus policy areas. Such 'deep' trade agreements are expected to enhance India's participation in global value chains (GVC), advancing its path towards Viksit Bharat 2047.

Strategic diplomacy through international trade policies is evident in India's efforts to fortify bilateral agreements with the UK, New Zealand, and Oman amid heightened global uncertainty—from geopolitical tensions in Eastern Europe and West Asia to emerging risks in the Asia-Pacific. Parallel negotiations with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), expansion of preferential trade agreements with Chile, expansion of partnerships with MERCOSUR, and a deepening partnership with Qatar further underline this outward push.

The rationale behind these agreements has widened. Deep trade agreements are defined not merely by tariff reductions but by expanded access to services, harmonisation of standards through mutual recognition arrangements, investment flows, and labour mobility. Together, these elements can meaningfully upgrade GVC participation, spur job creation, and support more inclusive growth.

CETA: Boost to agri exports

Historically, the partnership between India and the UK has passed through multiple phases—from mere spice and cotton traders to colonial legacies and finally sealed as free trade partners. No doubt, the legacies played a critical role in shaping the bilateral dynamism between these two countries. The intermediate and capital goods constitute the bulk of India's import basket from the UK—indicating backward GVC integration. It includes refined oil, clothing, mechanical power generators, pharmaceuticals, and organic chemicals. Zero tariffs under the present agreement on parts and components will facilitate domestic manufacturers to ensure global price competitiveness of the value-added products. The negotiation of SPS (Section 4.20) and TBT (Section 4.24) under the agreement will create a win-win situation for the agri-exporters of India in terms of both reduction of production cost and export-market entry compliance cost. Two countries will cooperate to control pest outbreaks while maintaining their respective food safety and biosecurity standards. Participation of SMEs and ensuring gender parity through enhanced women's participation in international trade are two other critical pieces of this agreement.

India-NZ FTA: Human capital and cross-border labour mobility

India's imports from New Zealand include aluminium products, raw materials, and agricultural products. A 100% tariff duty exemption will boost Indian manufacturers, especially those engaged in labour-intensive agro-based and allied activities (including dairy products). The wool pulp/fibres/yarn imported at zero duty from New Zealand will boost the textile and garment manufacturing industries in India.

Simplification of cross-border mobility of students, working professionals, and education visas clearly indicates the intent of the Government of India to tap the benefits of the spillover effect in human capital formation. Potential cooperation in the field of traditional medicinal services (AYUSH) and health care facilities, education, IT and construction sectors under this agreement is prudent for job creation.

India-Oman: Energy security and regional integration

India's import basket from Oman includes energy-related products like crude oil, petroleum products (naphtha, diesel, etc.), raw materials, chemicals, fertilisers, metal products, etc. The duty-free access to energy-related products will ensure India's strategic resilience against global headwinds. Duty-free access to intermediate chemical ingredients will boost the fertiliser manufacturing industries in India by enhancing their global pricing competitiveness. Further, it has larger implications in terms of food security and competitiveness in food processing sectors. Enhancing the cross-border mobility of professionals and traditional medical services (AYUSH) in the Gulf region is another facet of this agreement. Mutual Recognition agreements, especially concerning the automatic acceptance of organic product certification issued by India in Oman, will reduce market access hurdles for Indian exporters.

India's market diversification strategy through FTAs will boost agricultural exports, service trade, and supply-chain resilience and foster 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' vis-à-vis the expansion of the domestic manufacturing base.

(Piyali is faculty, Economics and Public Policy, IIM Rohtak; Raktimava is a consultant with the National Council of Applied Economic Research; and Sanjib is a professor at the National Council of Applied Economic Research)

As their stocks tank, software makers are rebranding themselves as AI innovators. Sparkle emojis are everywhere, and some efforts have been more successful than others

SARAH KESSLER

NYT

Software? No way. We're an AI company now!

When ChatGPT came out in November 2022, Eoghan McCabe was about a month into his second stint as CEO of Intercom, the customer service software company he had co-founded a decade earlier. Growth had ground to a near halt, and now he had another problem.

McCabe foresaw an existential crisis: If chatbots could answer customer queries, and if they replaced customer service agents, companies "wouldn't need help desks — they wouldn't need the software anymore."

He decided that Intercom needed to become an artificial intelligence company, or risk becoming obsolete.

More than three years later, similar realisations about the potential for AI to disrupt software are suddenly rippling through public markets and wreaking havoc on the industry.

And that existential crisis has spawned an identity crisis: Software companies at every stage—from startups to publicly traded corporations—have been working hard to be seen as AI companies. Sparkles emoji and magic wand icons are everywhere, ".ai" has become a popular website domain, and venture capital investors say almost all of the pitches they're fielding from software startups have some kind of AI angle.

The reason for the panic is clear: Over the past 12 months, software stocks have seen their biggest plunge in more than 30 years, wiping out $2 trillion of market capitalisation from the peak, according to J P Morgan. The S&P North American Expanded Technology Software Index has dropped about 20% in just the past month. And shares of software giants Salesforce and ServiceNow are down more than 40% over the past year.

A lot of that damage has come just in the past several weeks, as the release of powerful new AI tools, like Anthropic's Claude Opus 4.6, have put into sharp relief how quickly the technology is advancing. Much the way that software has long disrupted whole industries, AI's arrival is redefining what it means to be an innovative tech company.

Pressure building in the startup world

As recently as 2024, PitchBook called the business model known as "software as a service," or "SaaS" — charging subscription fees for cloud software use — "the bread and butter of venture."

Now, what energy was left in the fading category has been sucked up by AI, a technology that could change both how software is built and how companies pay for it.

Although a slice of startups were pitching themselves as AI companies a few years ago, today "it's like almost all of them are," said Tony Wang, managing partner of 500 Global, which runs startup accelerators and venture funds.

Almost half of venture capital last year went to AI startups, according to CB Insights. And at least 135 of the 151 companies in the latest cohort of startups in the tech accelerator Y Combinator identify as AI companies, according to its directory, including 14 with names that end in "AI"

McCabe successfully made the pivot: Within three months after the release of ChatGPT, Intercom, which remains privately held, released an AI customer service agent. The company's growth rate soared, and annual recurring revenue ratcheted up to nearly $100 million, McCabe said.

But many companies are still scrambling to make the transition.

For almost a decade, Amelia Lerutte has worked on marketing for SaaStr, a company that hosts events for enterprise software founders. She said the tone among software founders working to build AI into their products had changed from just a year ago.

"I think now there's definitely a bit of panic around it — I don't want to say panic in a bad way, but just like they're trying to catch up," she said.

To reflect the focus of the founders in its community, SaaStr has changed its name to SaaStr AI. And Lerutte's job title changed to chief AI officer. She now spends much of her time deploying AI agents, some of which are open for SaaStr's community of founders to use.

Last weekend, she used AI coding tools to create a product management system. "It's pretty crazy that I could do that," she said. "This is literally a software tool we were paying for last year."

Omari Rigg, an entrepreneur who mentors startups through the tech accelerator Techstars, said he often saw shallow attempts at AI transformation.

"They'll change their domain name, for example, from word.com to word.ai, and they will change their entire messaging on their landing page and their LinkedIn to, like, 'We are an AI-enabled tool now,' right?" Rigg said. "But other than that, nothing they're really doing is actually leveraging a ton of actual AI." Does that strategy work? Largely no, venture capital investors say. "It's very quick to see," said Byron Deeter, a partner at Bessemer Venture Partners who has focused on cloud software companies.

AI is disrupting AI

So-called AI wrappers — companies that build an interface that gives users access to the capabilities of another company's LLM — have already been disrupted. For example, Jasper, then a writing tool for marketers powered by OpenAI, raised $125 million at a $1.5 billion valuation in 2022. But it started to cut the internal value of its shares after OpenAI released ChatGPT and users began going straight to the source for help with their writing, according to *The Intercept*. (Loreal Lynch, the company's chief marketing officer, said in a statement to *The New York Times* that it had since expanded its product to run entire marketing programmes and had seen "2X year-over-year revenue growth.")

Other categories of AI companies have gone through an entire startup lifecycle so quickly that they're no longer appealing to early-stage investors. "There are even AI companies that we were interested in maybe a year and a half ago that we're no longer interested in," Wang of 500 Global said. "And that is a fast-moving cycle."

Many analysts and investors believe that public market investors have jumped the gun on writing the obituary for software companies. "The market is pricing in worst-case AI disruption scenarios that are unlikely to materialise over the next three to six months," J P Morgan strategists wrote in a note this month.

Bessemer's Deeter said that public market investors hadn't necessarily done the work to separate the software that was meaningfully leveraging AI from what was not actually adding value, and that software would be necessary to monetise AI models.

"Remember, the foundation models only get paid if there are consumers or apps pulling in payment," he said. "They're not a business in and of themselves."

Even with generative coding, said Wang, "it's building the UI, it's building the back end, it's deploying in the cloud, all that I consider software." **NYT**

Labour reforms or labour retreat?

K V CHANDRAMOULI

The Draft Industrial Relations (Karnataka) Rules, 2026, mark a significant moment in the state's labour governance. Framed under the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, they are presented as part of a simplified, modern, investment-friendly labour framework. For trade unions in Karnataka, however, the draft revives a long-standing concern: that labour reforms are steadily diluting workers' collective voice in the name of ease of doing business.

Union unease has not yet translated into a statewide agitation, but it is deep and structural. The anxiety stems less from individual provisions than from the broader philosophy underpinning the new labour codes.

A central concern relates to the framework for recognition of negotiating unions and councils. The prescribed thresholds are seen as weakening collective bargaining, particularly in establishments with multiple or fragmented unions. For organised labour, recognition is not a technicality but the cornerstone of negotiating power. Any dilution is viewed as a systemic tilt towards employers.

Unions are equally wary of the dispute resolution framework. Faster conciliation and adjudication are projected as efficiency gains, but rigid timelines and procedural compliance may privilege administrative convenience over substantive justice. There is apprehension that disputes will be pushed to closure rather than resolved on merit.

The right to strike remains intact in principle. Yet notice requirements and cooling-off periods embedded in the Code—and reflected in the draft rules—continue to draw criticism. Trade unions argue that excessive procedural barriers neutralise the strike as an effective instrument, reducing a constitutional freedom to a largely symbolic right.

These concerns have been reinforced by the Draft Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSH) Rules, 2026, notified earlier this year. The OSH Rules revive the contentious proposal of a longer workday. Although daily working hours are capped at 10.5 and weekly hours at 48, the state government is empowered to extend shifts up to 12 hours for specified factories or categories of workers.

The draft OSH rules also expand permissible overtime. While overtime wages are fixed at twice the ordinary rate, the quarterly ceiling has been raised to 144 hours—nearly three times the existing 50-hour limit. For unions, this risks normalising extended work hours by turning overtime from an exception into a routine feature.

Another flashpoint is the revised definition of "factory" under the OSH Code, which subsumes 13 earlier labour laws, including the Factories Act, 1948. Raising the threshold from 10 to 20 workers could incentivise outsourcing from larger factories to smaller units beyond stringent regulatory coverage, potentially fostering sweatshop-like conditions where safety protections and overtime safeguards become uncertain.

Concerns also surround the inspector-cum-facilitator regime. By prioritising advisory compliance over strict enforcement, the framework may weaken deterrence against violations, particularly in smaller and high-risk establishments. In Karnataka, these changes directly affect the Factories, Boilers, Industrial Safety and Health Department, traditionally tasked with enforcing labour safety laws. A shift from inspection to facilitation risks eroding deterrent authority at a time when vigilance remains critical.

The OSH Rules further dilute protections for interstate migrant workers by omitting displacement allowances mandated under earlier legislation. At a time of widespread and costly labour migration, reducing migration to a mere administrative category marks a retreat from welfare-oriented regulation.

The State Labour Department maintains that the rules simply operationalise central legislation and that state discretion is limited. Though objections and suggestions have been invited, unions argue that states retain enough latitude to introduce worker-friendly safeguards. Recent debates in Karnataka over extended working hours and labour flexibility have already strained relations between organised labour and the government, deepening a trust deficit.

There are positive elements. Penalties for violations have been enhanced, the duties of employers and workers more clearly defined, free medical check-ups for workers above 40 introduced, and licence consolidation with deemed approval promises administrative efficiency. Yet these measures do not address organised labour's core concern: the steady recalibration of power away from collective worker agency.

At its heart, the debate over Karnataka's Draft Industrial Relations Rules, 2026, is not about technical clauses alone. It is about balance and trust. .

(The writer is a retired deputy director of boilers)

OUR PAGES OF HISTORY

50 YEARS AGO: FEBRUARY 1976

Cong reunited in TN: Moopanar named PCC chief

Madras, February 15
A vast concourse of people (estimated at 2.5 million) gathered at the Marina sands lustily cheered the announcement of the formal merger of the Tamil Nadu Congress (0) with the Congress, by Party President D. K. Borooah tonight. Mr. Borooah named Mr. Karuppiah Moopanar, a close associate of late Mr. K. Kamaraj, as the president of the re- united Tamil Nadu Congress. The present Presidents of TNCC and TNCC((O) Mr. K. S. Ramaswamy and Mr. B. Mahadevan Pillai respectively will be the Vice-Presidents.

25 YEARS AGO: FEBRUARY 2001

TNLA leader Maran nabbed by TN task force

Chennai, Feb 15
In a major breakthrough, the Tamil Nadu Special Task Force Wednesday night apprehended Maran, leader of the separatist Tamil Nadu Liberation Army and the right hand man of brigand Veerappan, during a combing operations in the Siruvani jungles. Maran, who teamed up with Veerappan two years ago after a police crackdown on TNLA and Tamil National Retrieval Troops in the wake of a series of attacks on police stations, came into limelight after he masterminded the kidnapping of Kannada star Rajkumar.

OASIS | ROHINI S MURTHY

Kindness in silence

Silence and smile are two powerful words. Smile is the way to solve many problems and silence is the way to avoid many problems

There are many good morning messages I receive daily on WhatsApp. This particular quote somehow compelled me to think about who best personifies these words of wisdom? I didn't have to jog my memory for long as the smiling face of my father-in-law instantly came to my mind. True to his name, Ramamurthy, he embodied the persona of Lord Rama, one of calm endurance and compassion.

As a young bride, I didn't have to pretend or put a façade as he readily accepted my reticent nature without being judgmental. In fact, he put me at ease by simply smiling and nodding whenever I brought him a cup of coffee or tea. It was probably his way of approving the shy daughter-in-law.

Over the next few months, I realised that we shared a common interest in movies and politics. His eyes would light up whenever I shared some gossip about movie stars or the latest release. Here was a man, who derived great joy from simple things in life. Be it eating a meal in his favourite restaurant, watching a movie or writing Om Sai in a book, he had gracefully imbibed this quote of Khalil Gibran: You talk when you cease to be at peace with your thoughts. As a retired officer from the Indian Railways, my father-in-law did not spend his free time brooding about the glory days of the past, instead, he cheerfully accepted it as a leisurely phase of life. Even when he suffered two heart attacks, he refused to become cynical or curse his fate.

In a rare moment of self-expression, he once said, "Health problems can occur at any age, so no point in getting agitated. Instead, I prefer to enjoy the greater blessings of life like playing with my grandson, seeing my granddaughter graduate from IIT or watch Tendulkar play his best game." Just when Covid-19 cases were receding, one night he had a major health setback. While getting wheeled into the ambulance, I ran up to him and said, 'I know you will recover soon and come home'. Despite the pain, he smiled and waved goodbye. At that moment, I sensed that he was at peace with himself and the world he would soon leave behind.

It's been four years since my father-in-law passed away. I still remember him as a man of few words but abundant in love, who showed profound warmth and kindness towards me without having to say much at all!

Debate on motion to remove Birla to be taken up on March 9

TAWANG, PTI: The debate and subsequent vote on the no-confidence motion moved by the opposition against Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla will be taken up on March 9, when the House reassembles after the recess, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said here on Sunday.

Kiren Rijiju

Rijiju stated that the second part of the Budget Session, scheduled from March 9 to April 2, will be "interesting" as several "important" legislations and a "critical" bill will be presented in Parliament for debate and passage.

He warned that if opposition parties continue their protests as they did during the first part of the session, it would ultimately be detrimental to them.

"On March 9 in the Lok Sabha, we will have the debate on the no-confidence motion moved against the speaker. It is the rule to take it up on the first day. There will be a vote following the debate," he said.

The Budget Session began with the president's address to the joint sitting of Parliament on January 28 and went on recess on February 12. The Union Budget for 2026 was presented on February 1, and the session will resume on March 9.

India adds record 52.5 GW power capacity in 10 months

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

India has achieved a historic milestone in its power sector, adding a record-breaking 52,537 MW (over 52.5 GW) of generation capacity in just the first 10 months of the 2025-26 financial year (April 2025 to January 31, 2026).

This surpasses the previous full-year high of 34,054 MW set in FY 2024-25, marking the fastest capacity expansion ever recorded, the statement added.

The surge is predominantly driven by renewables, which contributed 39,657 MW—accounting for the majority of the new additions. Within this renewable push, solar power led the way with 34,955 MW added, followed by wind power with 4,613 MW.

As of January 31, India's total installed power generation capacity stands at 520,510.95 MW, comprising fossil fuel-based capacity of 248,541.62 MW, non-fossil fuel capacity of 271,969.33 MW, nuclear power of 8,780 MW, and renewable energy sources of 263,189.33 MW.

Overall, the additions represent more than an 11% increase to the country's total installed base in under a year, highlighting India's accelerating shift toward cleaner energy while supporting rising industrial and economic demands, the statement said.

NDA, I.N.D.I.A blocs pick Assembly election battles carefully

Parties are factoring in the spillover impact of these contests on national politics

SUMIT PANDE
NEW DELHI, DHNS

As they get their campaigns running ahead of the early-summer Assembly polls in four states and a Union Territory, the constituent parties of both the NDA and the I.N.D.I.A bloc are picking their battles with great care, factoring in their spillover effect on national politics.

After two successive terms in the Opposition benches, the Congress in Kerala has sought to put its house in order by bringing various factions on board.

Up against the Left Front in Kerala, it has decided not to join hands with the CPM in West Bengal, in what appears now to be a straight TMC-vs-BJP contest.

For the BJP, which will try to unseat the Mamata Banerjee-led TMC in West Bengal, that election is another opportunity to expand further east. Otherwise, the 15-year equilibrium almost resembles the Left-Congress stasis in the three-decade Left Front rule.

In Tamil Nadu, the BJP has conceded NDA's leadership to the AIADMK, the Dravidian outfit that would challenge the M K Stalin-led I.N.D.I.A bloc.

In two other southern fronts, Kerala and Puducherry, it has yet to emerge as a contender for power.

Of BJP and Congress

Interestingly, across the Chicken's Neck, the Northeastern state of Assam is fast emerging as a key battleground.

Assam is the only state where the BJP and the Congress — two national parties — are in a direct contest. In the last 12 years in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been in power at the Centre, the Congress has crumbled in a direct face-off against the BJP, barring a few exceptions like Rajasthan, MP, and Chhattisgarh in 2018, and Karnataka in 2023.

The Congress has not been able to shake off that perception, while regional parties fare better against the BJP. This baggage has weighed heavily on the Grand Old Party when it faces the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections.

After the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, Modi consolidated his position with the BJP's back-to-back victories in Haryana and Maharashtra.

The electoral outcomes in Bihar and Jharkhand, where regional parties were dominant players, had relatively local overtones.

For the BJP, a strong performance in state elections also brings electoral relief at the Centre, especially if it is directly against the Congress.

So, Modi's first stop after a turbulent pre-recess Budget session was Assam. On board IAF's Super Hercules C-130J transport aircraft, Modi touched down on a National Highway bypass in upper Assam's Dibrugarh.

In a major infra push for the Northeast, the Union Cabinet last week also approved a four-lane corridor.

The Congress, too, has shown a discernible alacrity in preparing for the battle of Assam. While Parliament was in session, top Congress leaders met in Delhi for two days to discuss and dissect the party's strategy.

India sealing pacts from position of strength: PM Modi

Cites FTAs with EU, UK & US as proof of confidence

NEW DELHI, PTI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said India is negotiating and concluding major trade agreements from a "position of strength", crediting sustained structural reforms, macroeconomic stability and rising manufacturing capacity for the shift.

In a wide-ranging interview with PTI, Modi contrasted his government's record with that of the UPA, arguing that earlier administrations failed to secure substantive trade pacts.

He emphasised that women would play the "most important role" in realising the Viksit Bharat vision.

Political stability and policy predictability, he said, have restored investor confidence, while stronger manufacturing, services and MSMEs have enabled India to seal free trade agreements with 38 countries from a position of strength rather than compulsion.

Listing three priorities for the coming decades—deeper structural reforms, accelerated innovation across technology, manufacturing and services, and simpler, trust-based governance—Modi said these pillars would ensure citizens and businesses operate with greater ease.

'Long-term strategy'

Rejecting the idea that the latest Budget was a departure from tradition or born of urgency, Modi said none of his budgets were conceived as routine "Bahi Khata" exercises. Instead, he described a consistent long-term strategy rooted in "whole of the nation" thinking, continuity of purpose and phased implementation.

"This is not a 'now or never' moment born out of compulsion. It is a 'we are ready' moment born out of preparation and inspiration," he said, adding that the 2026-27 Budget reflects India's determination to become a developed nation.

> During the years of the UPA government, they tried to secure some trade deals, and yet the journey was marked by uncertainty and inconsistency. Largely because their economic mismanagement left India unable to negotiate from a position of confidence. They did not lay the environment to bring negotiations to a conclusion. Talks would begin and then break down. In the end, despite prolonged negotiations, very little of real substance was achieved..
>
> The 'now is the time' sense of purpose that you are alluding to has always been there within us. But today, that sense of urgency has become a national conviction ... So, this is not a 'now or never' moment born out of compulsion. It is a 'we are ready' moment born out of preparation and inspiration. This Budget reflects this yearning to become a developed nation.
>
> During the Operation Sindoor, one could see the benefits of the reforms we have undertaken in the last decade. Therefore, defence budgets, modernisation, etc., all these are parts of our continuous effort and need not be linked to any particular issue.

NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister

PM invites world to host data in India

With the Budget providing incentives to turbocharge investments in data centres, PM Narendra Modi on Sunday pitched India as a global hub for digital infrastructure and artificial intelligence, saying the country is ready to host the world's data and lead the next wave of the technology revolution. "The tax incentives announced in the Budget are designed to accelerate investment in this space, lower the cost of building advanced facilities and position India as a globally-competitive destination for data infrastructure."

The PM said that his government has used its tenure to plug "structural gaps left behind by earlier administrations", pursue bold reforms and lay durable foundations for a developed India.

India has recently concluded major trade deals with the European Union and the United Kingdom, while also reaching an understanding with the United States to ease tariff frictions and deepen engagement—moves seen as expanding market access for Indian exporters and integrating the country more closely with global supply chains.

"We now have FTAs with 38 partner nations, an unprecedented milestone in India's trade history," Modi said, noting that the agreements span continents and economies of varying strengths.

Modi's Viksit Bharat remarks a PR spin: Cong

NEW DELHI, DHNS: With Prime Minister Narendra Modi describing the latest budget and a string of trade deals signed by his government as foundations for 'Viksit Bharat', the Congress on Sunday dismissed his remarks in an interview as a "carefully scripted and desperate PR exercise", calling them part of his "favourite tactic of headline management".

The attack came after Modi, in an interview with PTI, criticised the previous UPA government for failing to secure substantial trade agreements, while emphasising that women would play the "most important role" in Viksit Bharat.

Congress General Secretary (Communications) Jairam Ramesh said the prime minister is "now resorting to his favourite tactic of headline management" as he is "under siege and attack" because of his "surrender to the US" on the trade deal.

"He is trying to divert attention away from his betrayal of lakhs and lakhs of farmers and other capitulations. His so-called interview is no interview, but a carefully scripted and desperate PR exercise. The PM has bent and is tired," Ramesh said.

The Congress leader claimed that Modi knew this year's budget was a "damp squib" and showed "every sign of intellectual exhaustion".

"Markets have reacted negatively and investors have been unimpressed. Hence, he feels the need to give an interview a fortnight after the budget was presented and just days after it was taken apart by the Opposition in Parliament. As usual, there are Modi-style one-liners that mean little in reality," he added.

'Only Ambani, Adani'

Congress Media and Publicity Department chairperson Pawan Khera said no surrender-like deal had taken place during the UPA regime. He alleged that Modi surrendered to China and US President Donald Trump, claiming that the PM's definition of the private sector "does not go beyond Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani".

In the interview, Modi said the budget was not a 'now or never moment' born out of compulsion but a 'we are ready' moment born out of preparation and inspiration. He said none of his government's budgets had been prepared with an attitude of creating run-of-the-mill 'bahi khata' documents, as "that is not our approach".

Rahul misleading farmers, says Shah

SATISH JHA
AHMEDABAD, DHNS

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday accused Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the parliament Rahul Gandhi of "lying and misleading farmers" regarding the US trade deal, asserting that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has "fully protected the interests of farmers, and there is no need to worry."

Launching the Central Bank Digital Currency-based Public Distribution System in Gandhinagar, Shah said, "I have come to say to the farmers of the country from this stage that Rahul Gandhi is lying and misleading farmers. In the trade deals with England, the European Union, and America, Modi ji has ensured protection of farmers."

"What lies are you spreading, Rahul Gandhi... that the Modi government has ruined the dairy sector? Modi ji has only ensured the safety of the dairy sector. Similarly, doors have been opened for fishermen, livestock rearers, and farmers to the global. I want to say that BJP leader Narendra Modi will never compromise with the interests of farmers," Shah said.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah during the launch of India's first Central Bank Digital Currency-based Public Distribution System at Mahatma Mandir, in Gandhinagar. PTI

"I feel like laughing when Congress's Shahzada Rahul Gandhi stands in Parliament and talks about protecting farmers. The Congress has a long history of misleading the country, and now they are spreading lies about trade deals," Shah claimed while challenging Gandhi to debate the harm or benefit of trade deals with the BJP youth wing president.

Shah also said that the previous UPA government had signed the Dunkel proposal and made farmers vulnerable. In contrast, he claimed, "The Modi government turned it around to safeguard farmers."

Rahul intensifies attack on govt, poses questions to PM

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Sunday stepped up the attack on the Union government over the Indo-US trade deal, claiming that one is witnessing a "betrayal of India's farmers" as he posed questions to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking "clear answers".

His questions pertained to Distilled Dry Grains (DDG), the import of soybean oil, the removal of non-trade barriers, and additional products that the US will be allowed to export to India.

"In the name of a US trade deal, we are witnessing a betrayal of India's farmers... Farmers deserve clear answers. This is not just about today. It is about the future—are we allowing another country to gain a long-term hold over India's agricultural industry?" he posted on 'X'.

RAHUL GANDHI
Gongress MP

"In the name of a trade deal with the US, we are witnessing a betrayal of Indian farmers.

On Saturday, he accused the government of cheating cotton farmers and textile exporters in the country. In a meeting with farmer leaders last week, Rahul also discussed the need for a large-scale national movement to oppose the India-US deal.

Raising a "few simple questions", Rahul asked what would importing DDG "really mean" and whether it would mean that Indian cattle will be fed distillers grain made from GM American corn.

He said, "Would that not effectively make our dairy products dependent on the American agricultural industry?"

Rahul also raised concerns of soybean farmers in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and across the country, asking what will happen to them if we import GM soybean oil. How will they survive yet another price shock? he asked.

With the joint statement by India and the US on the framework mentioning India buying "additional products", he asked what exactly that includes and does this signal future pressure to open up pulses and other crops to American imports over time.

"What does removing "non-trade barriers" actually mean? Will India be pressured in the future to soften its stance on GM crops, weaken procurement, or reduce MSP and bonuses?" he said.

Farmers' outfit questions govt narrative on India-US deal

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Rashtriya Kisan Mahasangh (RKM) — a prominent farmers' organisation — has questioned the government's narrative on India-US trade deal over the import of farm products being allowed and claims about the country having an advantage over neighbours like Bangladesh and Pakistan.

It cited US Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins' statements praising US President Donald Trump for supporting American farmers to claim that India had agreed to import agricultural commodities, while alleging that it showed a contradiction in Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal's remarks.

RKM national coordinator K V Biju described Goyal's remarks — defending the deal as beneficial for the country, especially farmers, compared to neighbours — as "deceptive", and said they raised questions about Centre's accountability.

Trinamool banks on welfare scheme amid BJP's unemployment barbs

ANIRBAN BHAUMIK
KOLKATA, DHNS

NEW GOVT AID

- TMC govt to roll out Yuva Sathi, a new scheme providing monthly aid to educated jobseekers
- Move aimed to blunt BJP's attempts to weaponise unemployment against party
- Beneficiaries – unemployed youths aged 21-40 years – to get Rs 1.5k per month for 5 years or till they get a job

With the West Bengal Assembly polls a few weeks away, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress (TMC) government has moved to roll out Yuva Sathi, a new scheme for providing a monthly allowance to jobless youngsters, ostensibly to blunt the BJP's attempts to weaponise unemployment against it.

The BJP, however, accused the TMC of trying to hoodwink the state's youths and cover up its failure in generating employment opportunities in the state.

The government has started receiving applications and necessary documents from eligible beneficiaries of the scheme—unemployed youths aged 21-40 years who passed matriculation or equivalent examinations — across the state.

Each eligible beneficiary will start receiving a monthly financial assistance of Rs 1,500, and will continue to get it for up to five years or till they become employed.

The disbursement to the beneficiaries' bank will start from April 1, when the state will possibly be in poll mode.

The BJP, meanwhile, stepped up its campaign against the welfare scheme, citing police action during a commotion at a camp set up at Chopra in the Uttar Dinajpur district to register prospective Yuva Sathi beneficiaries.

"When unemployment is rampant, and frustration is rising, even a basic demand for fairness sparks confrontation and results in indignation. Allegations of favouritism only deepen the sense of injustice," the state unit of the saffron party posed on X.

The TMC projected the scheme as a state government endeavour boost educated young jobseekers.

BOOM TO BLUES

Erratic snowfall puts Kashmir tourism at risk

ZULFIKAR MAJID
SRINAGAR, DHNS

In January 2025, Abdul Majeed inaugurated 7-M Cottage, his newly built hotel in Tangmarg — the gateway town to Gulmarg in north Kashmir. He had taken a substantial bank loan, betting on Kashmir's tourism boom and Gulmarg's standing as India's premier ski destination.

The timing seemed right. Tourist arrivals had surged in recent years. Infrastructure had improved. Hospitality investments were rising steadily across north Kashmir. Tangmarg, just downhill from the ski slopes, was expanding with new hotels and guesthouses catering to winter visitors.

Then the snow faltered. The 2025 winter saw inconsistent snowfall, with warm spells interrupting peak ski weeks. Advance bookings turned into last-minute confirmations dependent on weather forecasts. The winter of 2026 has been no better, recording below-normal snowfall again and reinforcing fears that the shift is not temporary.

An aerial view of houseboats in the Dal Lake on a sunny winter afternoon in Srinagar on Sunday. PTI

"Earlier, winter meant fixed business. Now everything depends on whether it snows," Majeed says.

For decades, Gulmarg's economy ran on predictability. Snow would settle by mid-December, deepen through January and last into March. Hotels priced rooms around a reliable 70-90 day ski season. Tangmarg thrived as the base for budget travellers and overflow accommodation.

Tourism operators say the ski window has narrowed in recent years. Snow often arrives late and melts early. Even when heavy snowfall occurs, intermittent warmer days disrupt conditions, shortening stays and affecting ski operations. The financial impact is disproportionate. Even a two-week reduction in peak skiing days alters revenue projections for businesses structured around seasonal spikes.

"We built assuming at least two solid winter months. Now even January feels unpredictable," says a Gulmarg guesthouse owner.

Construction in the Gulmarg belt is capital-intensive. Transporting materials, winter-proofing buildings and installing heating systems push up costs. Loans are calculated on occupancy assumptions heavily tied to winter demand. When snowfall is erratic, revenue fluctuates — but repayments remain fixed.

Environmental observers link the snowfall variability to broader Himalayan warming trends. Winters are becoming less predictable. Individual storms still draw visitors, but sustained snow cover — the backbone of ski tourism — appears less assured.

Kerala ryot ends life; financial stress suspected

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHNS: A farmer ended his life in Kerala, reportedly due to financial stress.

Ambattu Elias (62) of Cherupuzha in Kerala's Kannur district died on Sunday.

Elias, a cultivator for the last four decades, was the recipient of several awards for farmers. He was found unconscious at his farm on Wednesday. He was rushed to a hospital, and was put under treatment. He died by Sunday, said the local police.

(If you are in distress or have suicidal tendencies, please reach out to these 24/7 helplines: KIRAN 1800-599-0019 or Arogya Sahayavani at 104 for help.)

PSU banks raked in Rs 8.6k cr in minimum balance penalties in 5 yrs

UP, TN, Maha & K'taka top list; parl panel urges waiver

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Public sector banks collected Rs 8,621.12 crore in penalties from account holders for not maintaining minimum balance between 2020-21 and 2024-25, with Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra topping the list, statistics placed before a parliamentary panel showed.

Karnataka ranked fourth among states and Union Territories, followed by Bihar, according to the Lok Sabha's Committee on Petitions, which has urged banks to discontinue levying such penalties on savings accounts.

The highest penalties were collected from UP (Rs 1,233.97 crore) over the five fiscals, while Tamil Nadu stood second (Rs 1,21.38 crore) and Maharashtra third (Rs 1,088.18 crore). Karnataka was a distant fourth at Rs 529.20 crore, followed by Bihar at Rs 464.53 crore.

An analysis showed that penalty collections rose between 2020-21 and 2023-24, but declined in 2024-25.

Despite the SBI withdrawing the penalty on savings bank accounts in March 2020, the penalties rose from Rs 1,148.71 crore in 2020-21 to Rs 1,415.65 crore, Rs 1,785.90 crore and Rs 2,225.10 crore in the next three fiscals. However, the figures decreased in 2024-25, with penalties pegged at Rs 2,045.74 crore.

While the national trend saw a decline in 2024-25, six states and three Union Territories witnessed an increase compared to 2023-25. Tamil Nadu registered the highest growth of Rs 43.22 crore, from Rs 233.12 crore to Rs 276.34 crore in 2024-25.

Except Karnataka, all south Indian states saw an increase in penalty collections by banks. Banks collected Rs 65.19 crore from Karnataka in 2020-21 followed by Rs 103.75 crore, Rs 104.53 crore, Rs 133.29 crore and Rs 122.41 crore in the next fiscals.

Incidentally, Uttar Pradesh saw the biggest decline of Rs 51.84 crore, with collections falling from Rs 339.10 crore in 2023-24 to Rs 287.87 crore in 2024-25.

2020-2025 DATA

- UP tops list with Rs 1,233.97 cr; Karnataka fourth (Rs 529.2 cr)
- Penalty collections rose till 2023-24, dipped in 2024-25
- Despite SBI waiver in 2020, penalties climbed to Rs 2,225 cr
- Panel urges banks to end penalties on savings accounts
- Asks banks to ease burden on micro-entrepreneurs, self-employed and small traders

Maha ATS raids 21 locations in anti-terror crackdown

MUMBAI, DHNS: In a major coordination operation, the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) raided around two dozen locations in the Yavatmal and Ahilyanagar districts over the weekend following intelligence inputs about terror-linked activities.

Some people have been rounded up for investigations. The exact details about the operation are not yet available.

According to the latest reports, 14 places were raided in Pusad and Umarkhed in Yavatmal and seven locations in Ahilyanagar, earlier known as Ahmednagar.

Objectionable documents, mobile phones, electronic gadgets, and CCTV equipment are also being examined and seized peacefully as part of the action.

No arrests have been made in this operation so far, and detailed questioning of the suspects is ongoing.

It may be mentioned, last month, the Uttar Pradesh Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) had arrested Idhu Islam from Nagpur.

Islam is a close associate of Chhangur Baba, who is accused of masterminding a large-scale religious conversion racket from Balrampur.

In the past, from Maharashtra, several persons have been arrested for links with ISIS terror module cases.

SC to lay down guidelines for timely disposal of bail pleas

ASHISH TRIPATHI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Supreme Court has decided to lay down mandatory guidelines for the timely disposal of bail applications, saying it was extremely disappointed to see the manner in which such pleas were being dealt with.

A bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi directed the Registrar Generals of all the high courts to send complete details of the anticipatory bail or regular bail or suspension-of-sentence applications pending in their respective HCs — along with the date of filing, date of decision, or the next date of hearing — by March 23.

The bench felt, "We have no reason to doubt that the Chief Justices of the HCs are cognizant that the HCs, unfortunately, are unable to decide pending bail applications within a reasonable span of time."

"It seems that the orders passed by this court have not been able to bring about the desired sensitivity, due to which, the high courts have seemingly not evolved any robust mechanism for time-bound adjudication of bail matters," the bench said.

The observations came following a plea filed by one Sunny Chauhan against the Punjab and Haryana HC order that declined to prepone his bail application on the ground that the bail plea filed by the co-accused had already been rejected.

He also submitted a chart of some of the bail applications, pending since May 2025 and adjourned to different dates in March 2026.

Hearing this, the Supreme Court bench said, "We are extremely disappointed to see the manner in which prayers pertaining to the liberty of individuals are being dealt with.'

Space missions India's modern expressions of ancient scientific heritage: Rajnath

COIMBATORE (TAMIL NADU), PTI: India's space missions like Chandrayaan and Aditya-L1 are not just technological achievements but a modern expression that the ancient scientific spirit has always been a part of our cultural identity, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said here on Sunday.

At the inauguration of the Maha Shivaratri celebrations organised at the Isha Yoga Center, headed by Sadhguru, here, he said the sun and the moon are not just celestial bodies but form the basis of our calendar and festivals.

"Our fasts, festivals, and auspicious timings are determined through precise scientific calculations. Today, missions like Chandrayaan and other space programmes are modern expressions of our ancient scientific heritage, where tradition and technology move forward together," he said.

Rajnath Singh

"When India launches missions like Chandrayaan (Moon mission), Mangalyaan (Mars) and Aditya-L1 (Sun), it is not just a technological achievement; it is also a modern expression of that ancient spirit that has always been part of our cultural identity," he said.

"As we send satellites into space, we are simultaneously advancing our scientific culture," he added.

Observing that national security is usually associated with weapons, technology and physical strength of India's soldiers, he said, "all of these are important, without a doubt."

"But, if you look closely, real security does not come from external power alone. True security comes from a strong national consciousness. Only a fearless society can build a strong nation. This fearlessness does not come from physical strength, it comes from spiritual core," the defence minister said.

MISCELLANY

◆ COMICS ◆

Blondie

DOCTOR, LET'S SCRUTINIZE THESE FAST-FOOD INGREDIENTS UNDER A MICROSCOPE!
YIKES!
YUCKY!
SOMETIMES I FEEL BETTER NOT KNOWING THE INGREDIENTS
I HEAR YA, BRO!
GIVE ME ANOTHER "IGNORANCE IS BLISS" SPECIAL!!
ROGER THAT!!
11-7

Hagar The Horrible

WISE MAN, HOW DO I FIND TRUE HAPPINESS?
4:30
SQUEEZE SQUEEZE
BE A KIND SOUL TO YOUR FELLOW HUMANS!
OOPS!
WON'T YOU BE A KIND SOUL AND FETCH MY STRESS BALL?

Beetle Bailey

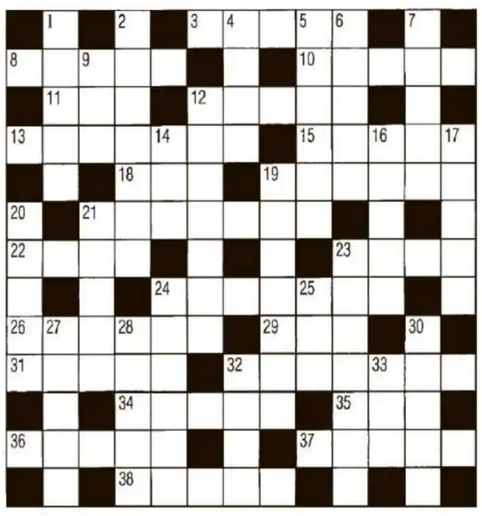
LT. FLAP NEVER HAS TROUBLE GETTING A DATE
10/25
WHAT DOES HE HAVE THAT I HAVEN'T GOT?
HE'S A GENTLEMAN, HE'S INTERESTING, AND HE PAYS FOR DINNER
GREG + MORT WALKER

Peanuts

Marvin

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS HALLOWEEN COSTUME FOR BITSY?
A HALLOWEEN COSTUME? WHEN DID WE DECIDE TO GET BITSY A COSTUME AT ALL?
I WAS HOPING THAT WOULD SNEAK BY YOU

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 12354



ACROSS
3 Destruction (5)
8 Doing words (5)
10 Pulped fruit or veg (5)
11 Plaything (3)
12 Anteroom (5)
13 Say unintentionally (3,4)
15 Refute (5)
18 Mingle, blend (3)
19 Gambling place (6)
21 Chatters (7)
22 Heinous (4)
23 Mail (4)
24 Crime against the state (7)
26 Formal order (6)
29 Faucet (3)
31 Beer mug (5)
32 Share expenses equally (2,5)
34 Outstanding (5)
35 Star sign (3)
36 Difficult question (5)
37 Light boat (5)
38 Insurgent (5)

DOWN
1 Discourage (5)
2 Extremely bad (7)
4 At the summit (4)
5 Musical dramas (6)
6 Heals (5)
7 Repeat (5)
9 Decompose (3)
12 Sports match (7)
14 Illuminated (3)
16 Buffalo (5)
17 Sounds a horn (5)
19 Originator (7)
20 Unwelcome plants (5)
21 Female relative (5)
23 Liked by many (7)
24 Term of office (6)
25 Unhappy (3)
27 Distinctive character (5)
28 Stair part (5)
30 Exclusive story (5)
32 DNA unit (4)
33 Number (3)

CRYPTIC

ACROSS
3 A takeaway sign (5)
8 It took a turn in forming a link with the Moon (5)
10 Sound that may come from the pipes (5)
11 Be quick to change ends (3)
12 A show to see again, we hear (5)
13 The realm of Isambard Brunel (7)
15 State the actual figure (5)
18 Beat in some small disturbance (3)
19 Stop arguing and pay the bill (6)
21 Treason would ruin this politician (7)
22 Brad, said to take a theatrical part (4)
23 Nonsense, but it keeps some boys quiet! (4)
24 Blames for using a club for certain ends (7)
26 Superior fur is always worth having (6)
29 After honey, perhaps, be at the back of the queue (3)
31 Occasions when some semitones echo back (5)
32 Better looking spectacles (7)
34 Part of the building where one gets fit for golf (5)
35 Get the girl (3)
36 Drunken sot, I see, showing no emotion (5)
37 Historically, did he perform cleverly on sax? (5)
38 Homes in the finest surroundings (5)

DOWN
1 Run it around town (5)
2 A hairy turn (7)
4 As a report, it takes me aback (4)
5 He takes too much interest (6)
6 Shooting at flying saucers! (5)
7 It can be boring for the soldiers (5)
9 She makes not a single sound! (3)
12 Love in Cremona (7)
14 Could you sing to him when dancing? (3)
16 A novel musketeer (or a Tommy?) (5)
17 An ill-tasting drink makes them hiss! (5)
19 This clue is not impossible (7)
20 Speak volubly in some place out of turn (5)
21 What dissipated mates may run out of? (5)
23 Polish making the Brentford team get stronger! (7)
24 Are its wines on a scale that's unusual? (6)
25 It's very wet in southeast central Spain (3)
27 Riddles concerning broken fists (5)
28 Being wrong is only the first thing to do! (5)
30 It fits in jointly (5)
32 Too much left in the intestine (4)
33 Several? Yes, ten! (3)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 2667

ACROSS: 1 Wombat, 4 Wide-open, 9 Solely, 10 Sanction, 12 In demand, 13 Caveat, 15 Head, 16 Living it up, 19 Dead ringer, 20 Halo, 23 Brazen, 25 Supposed, 27 Castaway, 28 Rather, 29 Expedite, 30 Gently.

DOWN: 1 Waspish, 2 Melodrama, 3 Aplomb, 5 Ivan, 6 Exchange, 7 Pride, 8 Nonstop, 11 Ancient, 14 Give out, 17 That's that, 18 Free hand, 19 Debacle, 21 Orderly, 22 Uptake, 24 Aesop, 26 Fast.

◆SU-DO-KU-6831◆

1		5			3			
	2		6					
	3				8	4		
4	9			6		5	8	
	5	7		8			2	3
		2	4				6	
					2		3	
			1			9		2

medium

SOLUTION TO 6830

1	2	8	7	5	3	9	6	4
5	4	7	2	9	6	8	1	3
3	9	6	8	1	4	2	5	7
7	1	5	4	6	2	3	9	8
4	8	9	5	3	7	1	2	6
6	3	2	1	8	9	4	7	5
2	6	4	3	7	1	5	8	9
9	5	3	6	2	8	7	4	1
8	7	1	9	4	5	6	3	2

To solve the puzzle: To solve a su-do-ku puzzle, every digit from1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows, and in each of the nine boxes.

SCRABBLE™

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R1 S1 B3 E1 E1 U1 A1 — RACK 1

N1 E1 M3 O1 E1 E1 G2 — 4th Letter Triple — RACK 2

R1 E1 E1 C3 D2 S1 S1 — Triple Word Score — RACK 3

T1 R1 W4 T1 A1 A1 H4 — RACK 4

PAR SCORE 105-115
by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in the Collins English Dictionary. JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

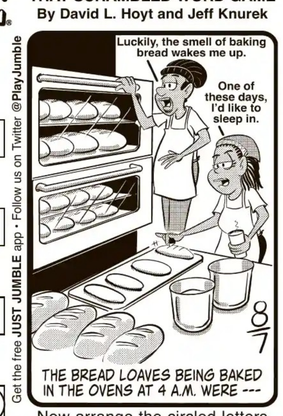
B3 A1 S1 T1 I1 O1 N1 — RACK 1 = 77
E1 L1 U1 T1 I1 N1 G2 — RACK 2 = 66
A1 S1 H4 O1 R1 E1 — RACK 3 = 13
E1 V4 O1 K5 E1 R1 S1 — RACK 4 = 64
PAR SCORE 145-155 — JUDD'S TOTAL 220

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

RBYER
SECTR
NIALDS
RYIFLM


Luckily, the smell of baking bread wakes me up.
One of these days, I'd like to sleep in.
8/7
THE BREAD LOAVES BEING BAKED IN THE OVENS AT 4 A.M. WERE ---

Get the free JUST JUMBLE app · Follow us on Twitter @PlayJumble

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: GLOAT DOGMA DETACH COLONY
Answer: When the fisherman reeled in a 50-pound fish of the genus Gadus, he said — OH MY "COD"!

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HITORI-3285

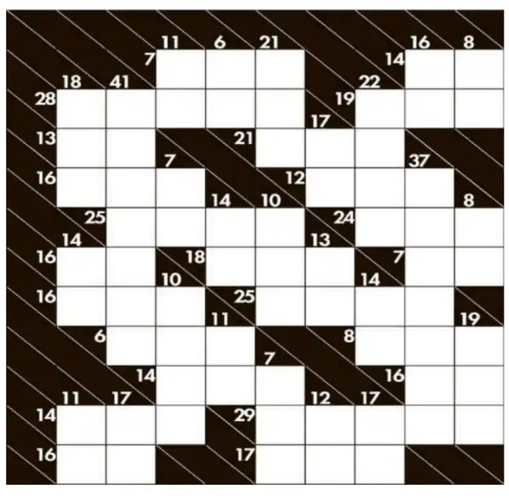
5	3	5	8	1	4	5	7
8	2	3	2	6	7	1	5
7	1	5	4	5	3	6	1
5	8	4	1	2	5	7	6
6	4	7	3	5	1	2	8
1	7	6	3	8	2	2	5
3	1	8	3	7	4	3	3
5	6	5	2	4	8	3	3

SOLUTION TO 3284

1	■	3	4	■	6	8	7
5	4	■	7	2	3	1	■
2	1	8	■	3	7	■	4
4	■	1	5	■	2	7	8
■	8	4	1	7	5	■	3
8	3	7	■	4	■	5	1
7	2	■	3	8	4	■	5
■	7	6	■	1	8	4	■

To solve the puzzle: Eliminate numbers by filling in squares so that remaining cells in that row or column do not repeat that number more than once. Filled-in cells cannot be horizontally or vertically adjacent. The un-filled cells must form a single component connected horizontally and vertically.

KAKURO- 3285



SOLUTION TO 3284

To solve the puzzle: Put a number from 1 through 9 in a cell. No zeros. A number in a cell separated by diagonal line tells the sum of numbers in consecutive cells at its right or downward. No number may appear more than once in consecutive cells.

SU DO KU X - 3829

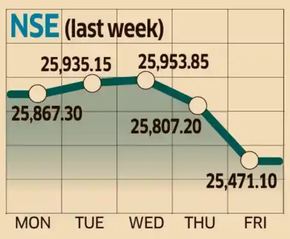
							3	
4			2					9
3								
								1
5				6	7			
	6	9		5	2	3		
		8					1	4
6								
7				4				

SOLUTION TO 3828

3	2	8	7	6	9	1	5	4
9	5	4	3	1	8	7	6	2
1	7	6	5	4	2	8	9	3
2	8	7	1	3	5	6	4	9
4	9	3	6	2	7	5	8	1
6	1	5	9	8	4	3	2	7
8	4	1	2	7	6	9	3	5
5	3	2	8	9	1	4	7	6
7	6	9	4	5	3	2	1	8

To solve the puzzle: The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

*Data as of Feb 13



TOP GAINERS		TOP LOSERS	
SBIN	12.42%	INFY	-9.12%
BAJFINANCE	4.32%	HCLTECH	-8.70%
TRENT	3.22%	TCS	-8.48%
TATASTEEL	3.12%	TECHM	-5.18%
LT	2.59%	HINDUNILVR	-4.89%

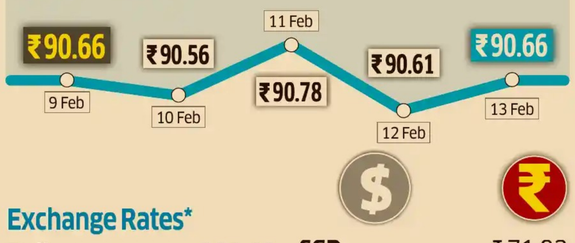
TOP GAINERS		TOP LOSERS	
SBI	12.40%	INFOSYS	-9.16%
EICHER MOTO	12.37%	HCL TECH	-8.69%
SHRIRAM FIN	6.31%	TATA CONSULT	-8.48%
APOLLO HOSP	5.45%	WIPRO	-7.21%
BAJAJ FIN	4.39%	COAL INDIA	-5.51%

Sensex (52-week)
Feb 13, 2025: 76,138.97 — Feb 13, 2026: 82,626.76 — 8.52%

Nifty (52-week)
Feb 13, 2025: 23,031.40 — Feb 13, 2026: 25,471.10 — 10.59%

10-year Bond yield 6.67%

STABLE RUPEE



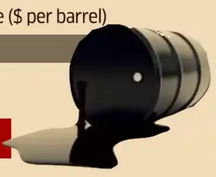
Exchange Rates*

Dollar	₹ 90.66	SGD	₹ 71.93
Pound	₹ 123.44	Yen (100 units)	₹ 59.20
Euro	₹ 107.62		

*Price at which banks sell

Crude Oil Rate ($ per barrel)

BRENT CRUDE
$67.75*
0.34%
*Rate as of Feb 13



Bengaluru fuel pump price*

(Retail)
Petrol* ₹102.96 ₹0%
Diesel* ₹90.99 ₹0%

*Rates as of Feb 14 #Rate change compared with yesterday

Commodity watch

COFFEE

Category	Rate (Rs per 50 kg)*
Arabica Parchment	₹ 23500 - 24000
Arabica Cherry	₹ 12000 - 13400
Robusta Parchment	₹ 17000 - 17300
Robusta Cherry	₹ 9650 - 10500

*Rates as on Feb 12

Other Commodities

Silkworm cocoon (Rs per kg)*

Bivoltine (BV)	₹ 836
Cross Breed (CB)	₹ 736

*Average rates as on Feb 13

AI IMPACT SUMMIT भारत 2026 INDIA

A GATHERING OF INTELLIGENCE FOR THE WORLD

The India AI Impact Summit 2026, a high-profile congregation of global leaders and industry heavyweights in Artificial Intelligence, will be held at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, from February 16-20. It comes at a pivotal moment as countries across the world race to define their AI strategies. Policymakers, technology pioneers and industry leaders will converge in the national capital to debate governance, innovation, and the future trajectory of AI. According to IT Secretary S Krishnan, the key message India wants to send to the world is that AI must remain human-centric and inclusive, with democratic access to AI resources, and with the potential to drive growth across all parts of the world.

Prominent World Leaders

- **Emmanuel Macron**, President of France
- **Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva**, President of Brazil
- **Pedro Sanchez Perez-Castejon**, Prime Minister of Spain
- **Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan**, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi
- **Anura Kumara Dissanayake**, President of Sri Lanka
- **Navinchandra Ramgoolam**, Prime Minister of Mauritius
- **Guy Parmelin**, President of Switzerland
- **Dick Schoof**, Prime Minister of The Netherlands

Over 40 CEOs of leading global and Indian companies are set to be in attendance. Some of them are:

- **Sam Altman**, CEO, OpenAI
- **Sundar Pichai**, CEO, Google and Alphabet
- **Bill Gates**, Chair, Gates Foundation, & co-founder of Microsoft
- **Mukesh Ambani**, Chairman & MD, RIL
- **Sridhar Vembu**, Co-founder and Chief Scientist, Zoho Corporation
- **N Chandrasekaran**, Chairman, Tata Sons
- **Salil Parekh**, CEO & MD, Infosys

Expected Footfall: **2 lakh+ attendees**

Key Dates & Restrictions

Feb 16: Expo closed (VIP movement); conferences open
Feb 18: All sessions close at 4.30 pm
Feb 19: Restricted entry for inaugural session (invitation only)

Gates open 6 am
Close 7.30 am (Feb 19)
Traffic restrictions around venue after 6 pm

Parking & Access: At Delhi Zoo, National Stadium, JLN Stadium, Shuttle services to venue. Entry via DigiYatra registration or QR code (Summit app). Attendees urged to use Metro (near Gate 10, Pragati Maidan)

'AI must be human-centric, democratic in tech access'

IT secretary says summit aims to look at ways to approach a tech likely to shape progress

NEW DELHI, PTI

Ahead of the AI Impact Summit, IT Secretary S Krishnan has said the key message India wants to send to the world is that artificial intelligence must remain human-centric and inclusive, with democratic access to AI resources.

In an interview with PTI, Krishnan said AI should be a positive force for the global economy, with the potential to drive growth across all parts of the world, including India and the Global South. "The key message that we want to send is that whatever happens with AI needs to be human-centric and inclusive. There needs to be a democratic access to AI resources, and it needs to be done in a way that people and humans are at the centre of this process," he added.

As countries prepare for deeper AI-adoption across sectors, India is positioning itself as a voice for equitable growth in the emerging technology landscape.

According to Krishnan, the broader goals are to ensure that AI becomes a truly inclusive technology, with the benefits of prosperity reaching all.

India is all set to host the India AI Impact Summit 2026, positioning the country at the centre for critical global conversations on AI governance, safety and economic growth. The summit will bring together policymakers, industry leaders and technology innovators at a time when nations are racing to define the AI agenda.

Krishnan underlined that AI must be leveraged as a "positive impetus" for the global economy, capable of putting the world on a higher growth trajectory.

The summit, he said, is aimed at fostering a meeting of minds among nations on how to approach a technology likely to shape global progress over the coming years.

"We need to look at it as a huge positive impetus to the overall economy, and the possibility of using AI, of leveraging this technology, to see growth across the world, including India, including the rest of the Global South, so that it becomes truly an inclusive technology, which puts the world on a higher growth trajectory, with benefits of prosperity reaching everybody," Krishnan said.

He noted that while investment announcements and partnerships could emerge from the mega gathering, the summit is a platform to deepen global understanding of AI, assess its impact on humanity, and deliberate on the steps needed to maximise its positive and beneficial effects for all.

He noted that the India AI mission supports indigenous foundational models.

"... foundational models include some large language models, some small language models, multimodal models, vision models, quantitative models, and a range of models. And as you're aware, the PM interacted with 12 startups and research institutions which were working on their models... in the coming week, we should see unveiling of some of the models, some of the work that has been done under the India mission," he said.

Krishnan noted that India has adopted an "innovation-first" approach in AI, while remaining prepared to regulate swiftly, if needed. Wherever possible, existing laws and regulatory frameworks would be leveraged, an approach also recommended by the Principal Scientific Adviser-led AI governance group.

"Each society, each country, does it in a way that suits its objective situation. And I think India's approach is what is best suited for our own needs," Krishnan said, adding that "we will legislate when the need arises, and we stand ready to put together a law, if need be, at short notice".

The summit presents a strong opportunity to highlight the work being undertaken by Indian companies and startups, as well as the depth of research and policy thinking that has emerged in the AI space in recent years, he pointed out.

"It's a wonderful occasion for people to converge on one platform and one forum to talk about issues which concern them... that should result in valuable outcomes," he said.

Over 2 lakh people expected to attend summit

More than 2 lakh people are expected to attend India AI Impact Summit 2026, and arrangements have been made for smoother traffic flow, especially for students in the national capital during the mega event, government officials said on Saturday.

While speaking with reporters, officials involved in the preparation for the summit said that guests will be able to attend the event by just registering on the DigiYatra or scanning the QR code on the India AI Impact Summit app at various entry points.

"We are making sure that we recycle some of that infrastructure they have created for the waste management there, so that we are also able to achieve a zero-waste conference given that there are going to be footfalls, which are more than 2 lakh over that period," a Meity official said.

Tea industry seeks policy support amid rising costs, labour shortage

Cheap imports, mislabelling of blended teas as Indian origin hurting producers

KOLKATA, PTI

Workers at a tea garden

India's tea industry is facing mounting financial stress due to rising input costs, stagnant prices, labour shortages and climate-related risks, prompting planters to seek policy support and structural reforms to sustain operations, industry representatives said.

"Many estates were being forced to sell tea below cost, leading to higher borrowings and financial strain. Unless we produce high-quality tea and fetch remunerative prices, sustainability is impossible," Uttam Chakraborty, Chairman of the North Bengal branch of the Tea Association of India, said.

He noted that wages account for nearly 60% of production cost, making the sector highly-sensitive to wage revisions and input inflation. Costs of fertilisers, coal, pesticides and electricity have risen sharply in recent years, with power expenses alone estimated at about Rs 10-11 per kg of made tea.

Shailja Mehta, President of the Association, said the industry was grappling with a long-term mismatch between cost escalation and price growth.

"It is important that harmony is reached between the cost of production and price realisation," she said, calling for a minimum sustainable price mechanism to ensure producers receive viable returns.

She highlighted the sector's economic importance at a recent North Bengal chapter AGM, stating that the tea ecosystem in the northern part of West Bengal supports around 32 lakh people, or roughly 28% of the region's population.

Industry officials said labour availability has become a major operational challenge, with some estates reporting absenteeism of 25-50% during peak production periods, forcing them to depend on outside labour at higher cost. Climate variability, including erratic rainfall, rising temperatures and pest infestations, is further affecting yields and quality.

Planters have urged faster release of pending subsidies from the Tea Board India, interest subvention on working capital loans and financial incentives for speciality tea production and machinery upgrades. They also want organised tea producers to be allowed access to schemes of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, arguing that tea cultivation is primarily agricultural in nature.

The industry association has also sought lower power tariffs and quicker implementation of solar power provisions notified by the West Bengal Electricity Regulatory Commission to reduce energy costs.

Stakeholders said cheap imports and mislabelling of blended teas as Indian origin were hurting domestic producers and called for stricter monitoring to protect quality standards and export credibility.

India is the world's second-largest tea producer and the sector directly employs more than one million workers.

'India-UK FTA may be implemented in April'

NEW DELHI, PTI: The India-UK FTA, signed in July last year, is likely to be implemented in April 2026, according to an official.

India and the UK, on July 24, 2025, signed the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) under which 99% of Indian exports will enter the British market at zero duty, while tariffs on British products such as cars and whisky will be reduced in India.

"We are expecting the pact to be implemented from April this year," the official said.

The two countries have also signed the Double Contributions Convention (DCC) pact to ensure temporary workers would not have to duplicate social levies in either country. The official added that both pacts are likely to be implemented in parallel.

The pact needs approval from the UK Parliament before it is implemented.

In India, the Union Cabinet approves such agreements. After it gets approved by the British Parliament, it will be implemented on a mutually-agreed date.

The House of Commons in the UK held a debate on the India-UK CETA earlier this week.

DH INTERVIEW

'Optimistic across our portfolio, enthusiastic about our top-end'

2025 was a landmark year for Mercedes-Benz India, with record revenue and sale of 19,007 units. The German luxury automaker saw double-digit growth in its top-end segment, and a 12% rise in EV sales, with electric vehicles now accounting for 20% of top-end deliveries. Amidst discount battles in entry-level luxury cars, the brand stayed the course, focusing on sustainable growth, localisation, and customer-driven powertrain choices, while preparing for a slew of launches in 2026. Mercedes-Benz India MD & CEO **Santosh Iyer** shares the strategy and vision of the company, apart from certain trends of the luxury segment, with **Hrithik Kiran Bagade** of *DH* in this candid interview.

Edited Excerpts:

How was the year 2025 for Mercedes-Benz in India?

Last year, we sold 19,007 units, which was the best-ever year in terms of revenue for us. If you look at segments, we had a growth of 11% in top-end vehicles. These are cars that cost Rs 1.5 crore and above. That showed significant growth. AMGs grew by 34%. When you look at electric vehicles, we grew by 12% compared to the previous year. The penetration of EVs in the top-end segment is 20%. So, if you look at all these data points, 2025 has been a great year for us.

After five years of dominance, was there a dip in your annual sales last year?

In luxury, there are three segments — entry, core, and top-end. Last year, there was an intense discount battle in the entry segment, and we decided not to participate in the price war that was underway. We want to grow sustainably. As I said, it was the best-ever year in terms of revenue, so absolute numbers don't matter, and we will continue advancing on the same strategy. This isn't the first time we've seen competitors discounting and selling cars, but we won't go on that route. Yet we are still leading by a fair margin as far as last year is concerned. We hold over 40% market share. In terms of sustainable growth, we are aiming for long-term, pragmatic growth. If you go back in history, some brands have grown inorganically via price.

How bullish are you on your EV segment? Are you concentrating on different powertrains at the same time?

First of all, in the EV space, we have grown by 12%. I spoke about 20% penetration in the top-end segment. We are localising EVs. We were the first in India to localise our EVs — EQS SUV and sedan — at our Chakan facility (Pune), way back in 2020-21. So we are committed. EV penetration is also based on price and government subsidies like 5% GST, as well as road tax incentives. If these go away, penetration will slow. So we would rather allow the customer to decide the pace of transformation. Accordingly, we would have all powertrains — gasoline engines, clean diesels, and EVs — and let the customer decide. We won't be driving the transition. Having said that, a lot of EVs will make their way into India in our portfolio, and we will continue to offer all products to customers.

The S-Class facelift was revealed recently. How many more models can we expect this year?

Twelve cars will be launched this year. We have already localised the GLS Maybach, while the new CLA will also make its way to India this quarter. The S-Class had a global preview, but it takes time to bring it to market. The S-Class is one car we are all looking at. For decades, effort was made to make the S-Class even better, because when you see earlier models, you think you have reached the pinnacle of automotive excellence — and then our engineers make it even better. I think that's where the anticipation comes from. We are optimistic across our portfolio and enthusiastic about our top-end. Our E-Class continues to be the highest-selling luxury sedan in India.

Santosh Iyer

You mentioned localisation. How are you currently managing, and what is your goal?

We have more than 11 cars locally manufactured at Chakan. We just localised the GLS Maybach as well. Investments in our manufacturing ecosystem in India exceed Rs 3,000 crore, the highest in the luxury car segment. That shows our commitment to the market. Around 92% of the cars we sell in India are locally produced. Besides, we have a sourcing office, and we are also sourcing from India for the world. We have been doing this for many years now.

What is your strategy against competition?

We have always led the market without focusing on the competition. Otherwise, we wouldn't have done the 'Retail of the Future' D2C model, and would still be in the push model of sales. We are determined by what the customer needs, and our brand is our most-valuable asset, which we won't dilute. We provide products to customers as they require. We are happy to see many initiatives copied by competitors — it helps grow the market. We welcome competition, in India and abroad. We are a '140-year-old startup' and will continue to be around for the next 140 years and beyond.

The luxury car segment in India is just around 1% of the total market. What challenges does it face?

Firstly, consider per-capita income. Many wealthy customers drive luxury cars, and the segment is growing. But there is also restraint when it comes to luxury purchases. The new generation is changing this — they want to consume luxury now. There is also a tendency to save more, which limits growth. One of the biggest issues is the price of luxury cars, which rises with rupee devaluation, affecting affordability. Some competitors bring cheaper cars and operate at lower price-points. Mercedes-Benz focuses on value over volume. Hence, growth hasn't been as rapid as it could be.

Do you think favourable policies can help change the trend?

The government has multiple priorities, and growing the luxury car market may not be one of them. But in general, infrastructure, especially good roads, has encouraged growth. If the rupee stabilises and prices remain steady, we may see dramatic growth in the luxury car segment.

What are your expectations from the India-EU FTA?

We have always advocated free trade. For India, an FTA would provide access to a larger economy and consumer base. For Mercedes-Benz India, irrespective of the FTA, we have already localised over 90% of our portfolio.

TOP PICKS

The data is sourced from Motilal Oswal Financial Services Limited

Delhivery
(ID: DELHIVERY)
BUY
Upside +36%**
Last close ₹420
Target: ₹570*

Britannia Industries
(ID: BRITANNIA)
BUY
Upside +20%**
Last close ₹5,971
Target: ₹7,150*

CAMS
(ID: CAMS)
BUY
Upside +17%**
Last close ₹720
Target: ₹840*

Ashok Leyland
(ID: ASHOKLEY)
BUY
Upside +16%**
Last close ₹205
Target: ₹238*

Bharti Hexacom
(ID: BHARTIHEXA)
BUY
Upside +20%**
Last close ₹1,661
Target: ₹2,000*

* Target price has been calculated on the basis of fundamentals ** Upside refers to more value stock is expected to generate than its current price

A second chance for small foreign asset disclosures

The Union Budget 2026 has introduced a taxpayer-friendly measure called the Foreign Assets of Small Taxpayers Disclosure Scheme, 2026 (FAST-DS 2026). The scheme recognises a growing compliance issue: many resident Indians have small foreign assets or income that were not reported in earlier tax returns, often due to lack of awareness rather than deliberate concealment.

India's Black Money law, enacted in 2015, imposes very stringent consequences for undisclosed foreign assets, including tax at 30%, penalty up to three times the tax, and even prosecution. While a one-time disclosure window was provided in 2015, many individuals with small or legacy foreign holdings remained outside its scope.

With increasing global information-sharing between tax authorities, cases are now surfacing where individuals had modest foreign accounts, overseas stock benefits, student savings, or assets accumulated during non-resident periods, but failed to report them after returning to India. The new FAST-DS 2026 scheme is intended precisely for such situations.

Who can use the scheme

First, where a resident taxpayer has undisclosed foreign income or an undisclosed foreign asset, and the total value does not exceed Rs 1 crore as on March 31, 2026. In such cases, the taxpayer can voluntarily declare the income or asset and pay tax at 30%, along with an additional amount equal to 100% of such tax. Once this is paid, the income or asset will not be taxed again, and the taxpayer will receive immunity from further penalty and prosecution under the Black Money law.

B E KUMAR PRASAD
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT & PARTNER, BALAKRISHNA AND CO

Second, many individuals acquired foreign assets legitimately while working abroad or from income already taxed in India, but failed to report them in Schedule FA after becoming residents. For such cases, where the asset value does not exceed Rs 5 crore, the taxpayer can regularise the non-disclosure by paying a flat fee of Rs 1 lakh, without any recomputation of tax.

Time-bound and electronic process

The declaration process is fully electronic. Once a declaration is filed and verified, the tax authority will intimate the amount payable. The scheme is expected to remain open for six months from the date of its notification.

A compliance-driven measure

FAST-DS 2026 is not an amnesty for large undisclosed wealth. It is a narrowly targeted, time-bound compliance window for individuals with small or technical lapses in foreign asset reporting. For many returning professionals, former students, or employees with overseas stock benefits, this scheme could be a practical opportunity to clean up legacy disclosures and avoid the severe consequences of the Black Money law.

Taxpayers with any foreign accounts, investments, or overseas employment benefits would be well advised to review their past filings and evaluate whether the scheme is applicable once the disclosure window opens. The detailed operational rules, forms, and timelines for the scheme are expected to be notified separately by the government.

The US-India deal and gold: Shine amid truce

Tariff cuts may ease safe-haven appeal, but strong global demand and India's jewellery exports keep it firm

HRITHIK KIRAN BAGADE
BENGALURU, DHNS

Trade Deal & Gold :
At a Glance
Tariffs Cut: US on Indian goods 50% to 18%
Gold Impact: Indirect – driven by sentiment, currency, and global risks
Domestic Boost: Lower tariffs lead to cheaper US imports, resulting in stronger jewellery exports (US = 31% share of India's gem and jewellery exports)
Global Demand 2025: 5,002t ($555 bn); top contributors:
China +28%
India +17%
Safe-Haven Role: Prices surged during tariff uncertainty; Pullbacks seen when trade optimism returns
Recent prices (Feb 13):
Domestic
Rs 1,60,900 per 10 grams
International
$5,062/oz
Analysts' View: Short-term dips possible, but long-term global and domestic demand remains robust

With New Delhi and Washington moving to ease trade frictions and signing an interim trade agreement that slashes US tariffs on Indian goods to 18% from 50%, much attention has centred on manufacturing, textiles and technology. But in India—where gold is as much a cultural cornerstone as a commodity — another question arises: what does the thaw mean for bullion?

Gold is a global commodity priced in dollars, traded across continents, and influenced far beyond bilateral tariffs. According to analysts, the consequences of easing trade tensions, therefore, are unlikely to be direct or structural. Instead, they filter through subtler channels — investor sentiment, currency movements, and broader economic confidence. Tariff reductions may marginally soften gold demand in the near term by easing uncertainty, supporting the rupee and lowering import costs. Yet the broader price trajectory will continue to hinge on US monetary policy, geopolitical risks and central bank buying.

Record-breaking run

The yellow metal has been on a remarkable surge over the past year, punctuated by brief consolidations. According to the World Gold Council's (WGC) Full-Year 2025 Gold Demand Trends report, total gold demand reached a new high of 5,002 tonnes, valued at $555 billion. Global investment demand climbed to 2,175 tonnes, the primary driver of gold's rally. Investors poured 801 tonnes into gold ETFs, while bar and coin demand reached 1,374 tonnes, worth $154 billion. China (+28% YoY) and India (+17% YoY) together accounted for more than half of global bar and coin demand.

"With economic and geopolitical instability showing little sign of retreat in 2026, momentum from last year's strong gold demand is likely to persist," says Louise Street, Senior Markets Analyst at WGC, noting gold crossed $5,000 per ounce early this year.

"Persistent geopolitical uncertainty, growing unease around fiscal discipline in developed markets, and fears of long-term currency debasement kept gold firmly stable. Central bank buying and strong ETF inflows provided additional structural support," echoes Mirae Asset.

Safe-haven bid amid trade tensions

Gold's recent behaviour illustrates its sensitivity to trade shocks. When the Trump administration imposed 50% tariffs on Indian goods last August, uncertainty spiked and investors sought refuge in defensive assets.

"Gold reaffirmed its role as a safe-haven asset following the US announcement of 50% tariffs on Indian goods," says Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst — Commodities, HDFC Securities. "In the first two months, domestic gold prices rose nearly 15%. From the August 7 tariff announcement, prices surged close to 40%."

By January 29, gold had hit all-time highs in both dollar and rupee terms. International prices climbed past $5,500 per ounce, while on the Multi-Commodity Exchange (MCX), 24-carat gold approached Rs 1.92 lakh per 10 grams.

Historical parallels underscore the pattern. During US-China trade tensions in 2018-19, gold rose from roughly $1,200 per ounce in August 2018 to around $1,550-1,560 by September 2019—a 30% gain. When trade optimism returned late 2019, prices pulled back to $1,445-1,480 per ounce. Gold thrives on uncertainty; as clarity returns, the "insurance premium" embedded in its price diminishes.

The New Deal and market reaction

On February 2, 2026, US President Donald Trump announced a trade deal with India, cutting tariffs to 18%. Domestic gold prices climbed to Rs 1.57 lakh per 10 grams the following session.

But as trade talks progressed positively and the dollar strengthened, prices briefly eased. On February 12-13, gold fell about 2.8% to near one-week lows (about $4,938 per ounce) after strong US jobs data and technical selling.

"Gold has fallen recently in short-term periods mainly because of profit-taking after record rallies, a stronger US dollar and positive macro data," analysts note. However, the broader trend over 2025-early 2026 still shows significantly higher prices overall, despite periodic pullbacks.

"Short term, reduced volatility and a stronger Indian Rupee could cap domestic gold prices," says Renisha Chainani, Head of Research at Augmont. "Over the medium to long term, structural drivers — US fiscal stress, rate cuts, geopolitical realignments, and sustained investment demand—are likely to keep gold well-supported, with corrections attracting strategic buying."

Rahul Kalantri, VP — Commodities, Mehta Equities Ltd, sees limited direct impact from the trade pact. "Gold is a global commodity, so most of the impact will be indirect. Easing trade tensions can improve risk sentiment and reduce safe-haven demand, which may lower its premium and exert some downward pressure in the medium term."

Domestic angle

Domestic dynamics, particularly in the gems and jewellery sector, may move differently. Lower tariffs reduce costs for US importers, potentially reviving Indian gold and jewellery exports and supporting manufacturing.

"With tariffs lowered, US importers face lower costs, which can help revive Indian gold and jewellery exports, lifting physical demand," Kalantri states, noting that a stronger rupee typically makes imports cheaper locally.

The US is India's largest market for gems and jewellery, accounting for 31% ($9.23 billion) of industry exports. "Tariff cuts lower costs for US importers, provide immense relief to diamond jewellery manufacturers, boost competitiveness and revive demand," says Kirit Bhansali, Chairman, The Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC).

According to Gandhi, the rollback is positive for an industry under pressure from high tariffs and record gold prices that dampened retail demand.

Trade agreements rarely move gold in a straight line. The metal responds to liquidity, macroeconomic signals and investor psychology, rather than tariff schedules. When trade barriers fall and currencies stabilise, gold's shine in financial markets may dim modestly. Yet in India's bazaars and export workshops, lower tariffs and revived shipments could support physical demand, reinforcing gold's dual role—investment and cultural core.

Mcap of top-6 valued firms erodes by Rs 3 lakh crore

NEW DELHI, PTI: The combined market valuation of six of the top-10 valued firms eroded by more than Rs 3 lakh crore last week, with IT majors Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys emerging as the biggest laggards amid a bearish trend in equities.

The BSE benchmark declined by 953.64 points, or 1.14%, over the past week.

TCS, Infosys, HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), and Bharti Airtel faced erosion from their valuation, while State Bank of India, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro and ICICI Bank were the gainers.

The market valuation of TCS tumbled Rs 90,198.92 crore to Rs 9,74,043.43 crore, while Infosys' valuation eroded by Rs 70,780.23 crore to Rs 5,55,287.72 crore.

The market valuation of HDFC Bank declined by Rs 54,627.71 crore to Rs 13,93,621.92 crore, and that of Reliance Industries plunged by Rs 41,883 crore to Rs 19,21,475.79 crore.

Life Insurance Corporation of India's market capitalisation (mcap) dropped by Rs 23,971.74 crore to Rs 5,46,226.80 crore, and that of Bharti Airtel declined by Rs 19,244.61 crore to Rs 11,43,044.03 crore.

However, the valuation of State Bank of India (SBI) jumped Rs 1,22,213.38 crore to Rs 11,06,566.44 crore.

The mcap of Bajaj Finance climbed Rs 26,414.44 crore to Rs 6,37,244.64 crore, and that of Larsen & Toubro's valuation increased by Rs 14,483.9 crore to Rs 5,74,028.93 crore.

ICICI Bank's mcap rose by Rs 5,719.95 crore to Rs 10,11,978.77 crore.

Reliance Industries remained the most valued firm, followed by HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, Tata Consultancy Services, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro, Infosys, and Life Insurance Corporation of India.

WEEK AHEAD

Markets may transition into liquidity-driven phase

Sustained FII participation and stability in global yields will remain critical

SIDDHARTHA KHEMKA

Indian equities are expected to trade range-bound during this week amid mixed global cues and continued sector-specific volatility. With major earnings announcements largely behind us, markets are likely to transition into a liquidity- and commentary-driven phase. High-frequency indicators such as GST collections, PMI readings and auto sales will be monitored for demand momentum. Leadership is likely to remain with earnings-backed large caps and defensives, while globally exposed technology names may witness intermittent volatility as AI-led business models evolve.

Improved clarity on the fine print of the India–US trade agreement has strengthened visibility for export-oriented sectors. Key economic data to be released this week includes Japan GDP, India WPI, UK CPI, US initial jobless claims and manufacturing PMI. Sustained FII participation and stability in global yields will remain critical in shaping near-term direction.

Last week, equity markets witnessed broad-based weakness, with benchmark and broader indices closing in the red. The Nifty50 declined 1.2%, while the Nifty Midcap100 fell 0.4% and the Nifty Smallcap100 dropped 1.0%. Sectorally, performance was polarised. Nifty PSU emerged as the top gainer (+3.0%), followed by Healthcare index (+1.7%), Nifty Auto (+1.5%) and Financial Services (+1.2%), indicating selective strength in rate-sensitive and value-oriented pockets. On the flip side, Nifty IT was the worst hit, plunging (-10.1%) amid global technology sell-off and artificial intelligence–related disruption concerns, followed by Nifty Energy (-1.8%) and Nifty Metal (-1.4%).

Healthcare strength was earnings-led and supported by improving domestic demand trends. The Indian pharma market grew 11.5% YoY in January 2026, moderating from December but remaining robust. Chronic therapies continued to outpace acute, growing 16% YoY, driven by strong traction in Cardiac, Anti-diabetic and VMN segments. On a rolling 12-month basis, industry growth stood at 9.1% YoY, with chronic therapies maintaining superior momentum. The data reinforces the structural shift toward chronic therapies amid India's changing demographic profile and supports sustained earnings visibility for quality pharma franchises.

Within IT, the recent underperformance reflects concerns that generative AI could reduce traditional outsourcing demand by improving automation and productivity. However, past trends suggest that new technologies tend to expand the opportunity set rather than displace Indian IT firms. During earlier shifts such as cloud adoption, IT companies were not displaced but instead helped enterprises implement and scale those technologies. A similar pattern could emerge with AI, where global enterprises partner with established IT vendors to integrate AI tools across business functions. While near-term pricing pressure and project reprioritisation may weigh on growth, we believe the structural outlook will remain contingent on the adoption curve of AI solutions and the extent to which IT services firms can participate meaningfully in this evolving value chain.

From a macro standpoint, retail inflation rose to 2.75% in January under the new 2024-base CPI series, driven primarily by food and precious metal prices. Despite the base revision limiting direct comparison with the earlier series, inflation remains well within RBI's tolerance band, reinforcing expectations of policy stability and supportive real rates. This contained inflation environment continues to anchor domestic risk sentiment.

In the Capital Markets segment, liquidity trends further strengthen the backdrop. January witnessed a 25% MoM rise in total ADTO to Rs 594 lakh crore, led by robust participation across cash and derivatives segments. Demat additions of 3.6 million highlight sustained retail engagement, even as primary market fundraising moderated, indicating that flows are currently concentrated in secondary markets. Importantly, FII sentiment toward India has turned more constructive, with net equity purchases of over ₹Rs 6,000 crore so far this month (up to February 12), marking a reversal after prolonged selling. Reduced tariff uncertainty, macro stability and resilient earnings expectations have collectively improved global investor confidence.

India's life insurance industry growth moderated to ₹9% YoY in January (individual WRP), easing from elevated levels seen post GST exemption. Private players grew 7% YoY, while Life Insurance Corporation of India sustained stronger growth of ₹15% YoY for the fourth consecutive month, indicating continued market share gains and steady underlying demand. The moderation appears cyclical rather than structural, with underlying premium demand intact and growth likely to vary across players based on distribution strength and product mix.

(The writer is Head of Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Limited)

SHINING BRIGHT

India's gem & jewellery exports remained broadly stable, says GJEPC

MRITYUNJAY BOSE
MUMBAI, DHNS

India's gem and jewellery exports remained broadly stable during April 2025-January 2026, reflecting resilience amid global trade headwinds and tariff-related pressures in key markets, according to the Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC).

Overall gross exports stood at $23.19 billion (Rs 2,03,280.72 crore), registering a marginal decline of 0.64% in dollar terms, while growing by 3.57% in rupee terms, compared to exports of $23.33 billion (Rs 1,96,277.49 crore) recorded during the same period of the previous year.

This performance underscores the sector's underlying stability, despite volatile global conditions.

The export outcome was significantly influenced by a sharp contraction in shipments to the US, India's largest gems and jewellery export destination, where exports declined by over 45% due to elevated tariffs and pricing disadvantages.

However, the recently announced India-US trade deal, which restores tariff access for gems and jewellery at 18%, is expected to be a major inflection point. The tariff rollback is projected to lift India's gem and jewellery exports by up to $3 billion in the near term, driven by renewed price competitiveness and trade re-creation.

Even as exports to the US faced temporary pressure, India successfully diversified its export markets, recording strong growth across several key destinations.

During April 2025-January 2026, exports to the UAE grew 23.71%, Hong Kong rose 33.5%, while Australia and France posted robust growth of over 36% each. Other markets such as Belgium, Thailand and Israel also recorded double-digit growth, demonstrating India's growing global footprint and the industry's ability to adapt to shifting trade dynamics.

"India's gem and jewellery exports have remained broadly stable during April-January at $23.19 billion, despite global headwinds, with a marginal decline in dollar terms and positive growth in rupee terms underscoring the sector's resilience. The announcement of the framework for India-US trade deal has brought much-needed relief, with the revised 18% tariff on jewellery and zero duty on diamonds and coloured gemstones, which will place India in a structurally-superior position over key competitors — across diamonds, coloured gemstones and studded gold jewellery," said Kirit Bhansali, Chairman, GJEPC.

According to him, this advantage is expected to help Indian exporters regain lost ground in the US market and re-create trade, potentially adding up to $3 billion in the near term. Supported by market diversification and a strong pipeline of trade agreements, the industry is well-positioned for recovery and sustained growth in FY2026–27.

April 2025–Jan 2026
TRENDS
$342.34 mn
Coloured gemstone exports, dipped lower by 3.38% YoY, reflecting stable, but subdued demand
$923.62 mn
Polished lab-grown diamond exports, clocking a decline of 9.73% YoY in value
$9.97 bn
Cut and polished diamond exports registering 7.46% YoY decline
$9.71 bn
Total gold jewellery exports, including plain and studded jewellery, logging 5.53% growth
$1.28 bn
Silver jewellery exports surged 51.21%, driven by international demand and higher silver prices
$215.15 mn
Platinum jewellery exports grew 49.09%, aided by acceptance in premium markets, and price appreciation

B'desh seeks reset in India ties, says Tarique's aide

'Onus lies on Delhi to recognise changed political reality'

DHAKA, PTI

Bangladesh wants to reset ties with India on a fresh footing now that ousted premier Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League party no longer hold power, Humayun Kabir, adviser to BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman, has said, asserting that the two nations should work together for "mutual benefit".

Rahman's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) on Friday secured a sweeping victory with more than two-thirds majority in the landmark parliamentary elections held on Thursday.

In an interview to PTI Videos on Saturday, Kabir stressed that the onus lies on India to recognise the changed political reality in Bangladesh after the BNP's resounding electoral mandate.

"The change has to come from the mindset in India. Sheikh Hasina and Awami League don't exist in today's Bangladesh anymore. The people have given a clear verdict in favour of BNP," Kabir said.

Kabir described Hasina, who fled to India after 2024's August uprising, as a "terrorist" responsible for the deaths of over 1,500 people.

Kabir urged the Indian government to ensure that its territory is not used by Hasina or other Awami League figures in ways that could affect stability in Bangladesh.

"India must not be seen as complicit in any activities that undermine Bangladesh's sovereignty. Once that is addressed, normal diplomatic cooperation can resume. We are neighbours and should work together for mutual benefit," he added.

India on November 26, 2025, said it is examining a request by Bangladesh's interim government to extradite Hasina and asserted that it is committed to ensure the best interests of the people of that country.

"We remain committed to the best interests of the people of Bangladesh, including peace, democracy, inclusion and stability in that country and will continue to engage constructively in this regard with all stakeholders," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

Ready for nuke deal if US lifts sanctions: Iran

Remark follows resumption of talks between two nations

TEHRAN, AFP

Iran is ready to compromise on its stockpile of highly enriched uranium in exchange for US sanctions being lifted, its deputy foreign minister said in a BBC interview published Sunday.

Majid Takht-Ravanchi's remarks followed a resumption of nuclear talks between Iran and the United States in Oman on February 6.

Switzerland on Saturday announced that a new round of talks would take place in Geneva next week, but without specifying which day.

Iran has not yet officially confirmed the new round of talks, but Takht-Ravanchi, who was in Iran's Oman delegation led by Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, said they would be on Tuesday, the BBC reported.

Western countries, led by the United States as well as by Israel, Iran's arch-enemy and considered by experts to be the only nuclear power in the Middle East, accuse the Islamic republic of seeking to acquire nuclear weapons.

Tehran denies having such military ambitions, but insists on its right to this technology for civilian purposes.

Iran is ready to compromise to reach an agreement with the United States including diluting its highly enriched uranium, but Washington must lift its sanctions which are crippling Iran's economy, Takht-Ravanchi said, according to the BBC.

"If we see the sincerity on their (American) part, I am sure we will be on a road to have an agreement," he said, speaking in English.

Deal must dismantle nuclear infra: Israeli PM

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday he told US President Donald Trump last week that any US deal with Iran must include the dismantling of Iran's nuclear infrastructure, not just stopping the enrichment process, reports Reuters.

WORLD AT A GLANCE

A reveler performs during the Batalla de Flores (Battle of Flowers) carnival parade in Barranquilla, Colombia. AFP

China confirms visa-free access for Canada, UK visitors from Feb 17

▶ China confirmed that Canadian and British citizens will be able to visit the country visa-free from Tuesday, after the two countries' leaders had announced such agreements following official trips to Beijing, reports AFP from Beijing.

British and Canadian prime ministers Keir Starmer and Mark Carney both visited Beijing in January, seeking to bolster relations with China and pivot from the increasingly mercurial United States.

Both leaders had hailed progress following meetings with top Chinese leaders such as President Xi Jinping, including on issues like visa-free access for their citizens to China.

Beijing's foreign ministry confirmed these agreements on Sunday, saying Canadian and British citizens will be able to travel to China visa-free from Tuesday, with the policy in effect until December 31.

"Holders of ordinary passports from these countries can enter China without a visa for business, tourism, visiting relatives and friends, exchanges, or transit for a period not exceeding 30 days," it said.

Israeli strikes kill 12 in Gaza

▶ Gaza's civil defence agency reported that Israeli strikes killed at least 12 people since dawn on Sunday, while a military official said the attacks were in response to ceasefire violations, reports AFP from Gaza City.

Despite a US-brokered truce that entered its second phase last month, violence has continued in the Palestinian territory, with Israel and Hamas blaming each other for violating the agreement.

The civil defence agency, which operates as a rescue force under Hamas authorities, said one strike hit a tent of displaced people in northern Gaza and another targeted an area in the south.

Five people were killed and several injured when an air strike targeted a tent sheltering displaced people in Jabalia in north.

Artisanal miners pan for gold in a hold dug in a patch of land in Ekurhuleni, on Sunday. This patch of land in a Springs township is now attracting gold prospectors from the surrounding area. AFP

Trump tells Hamas to proceed with 'immediate' disarmament

WEST PALM BEACH, AFP: US President Donald Trump on Sunday urged Hamas to move forward with disarmament under his plan for post-war Gaza, and said members of his so-called "Board of Peace" had pledged $5 billion to the Palestinian territory's reconstruction.

"Very importantly, Hamas must uphold its commitment to Full and Immediate Demilitarization," Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform, ahead of a February 19 meeting of the board in Washington.

Disarmament is a key part in the second phase of the US-brokered ceasefire plan sealed in October between Israel and the Palestinian militant group to end the war triggered by Hamas's attack on Israel in October 2023.

India right place to host AI summit: UN chief

UNITED NATIONS, PTI

India is a "very successful" emerging economy with a bigger influence in global affairs, and is the "right place" to host the AI summit, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said.

In an exclusive interview with PTI at the UN Headquarters ahead of the India–AI Impact Summit 2026, Guterres underscored that Artificial Intelligence should benefit the entire world and not just be a privilege reserved for developed nations or two superpowers.

"I strongly congratulate India for organising this Summit. It's absolutely essential that AI develops itself to the benefit of everybody, everywhere and that countries in the Global South are part of the benefits of AI," he said.

The high-powered event being held from February 16 to 20 will be the first-ever AI summit hosted in the Global South and is anchored in the three guiding principles of 'People, Planet and Progress'.

Guterres, who will be travelling to India to attend the Summit, asserted "it would be totally unacceptable that AI would be just a privilege of the most developed countries or a division only between two superpowers", an apparent reference to the US and China.

"It is absolutely essential that AI becomes a universal instrument for the benefit of humankind," Guterres said.

"The role of India, (which) is today a very successful emerging economy that is having a bigger and bigger role in not only the global economy but in its influence in global affairs, India is the right place to have this Summit and to make sure that AI (is) being discussed in depth, in all its enormous potential and also in all its risks, but that AI belongs to the whole world and not only to a few," he said.

Top Putin aide to attend conclave

Russian President Vladimir Putin's senior aide Maxim Oreshkin will lead a large delegation for the AI Impact Summit being held in New Delhi from Monday, reports PTI.

Oreshkin, who is deputy chief of the Kremlin staff and economic aide to President Putin, is set to lead the Russian delegation to the India AI Impact Summit 2026.

Rubio visits eastern Europe, bolsters ties with pro-Trump leaders

BUDAPEST, REUTERS

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio began a two-day trip to eastern Europe on Sunday to bolster ties with Slovakia and Hungary, whose conservative leaders, often at odds with other European Union countries, have warm ties with President Donald Trump.

Rubio will use the trip to discuss energy cooperation and bilateral issues, including Nato commitments, the State Department said in an announcement last week. "These are countries that are very strong with us, very cooperative with the United States, work very closely with us," Rubio told reporters before departing for Europe on Thursday.

Marco Rubio

Rubio, who in his dual role also serves as Trump's national security adviser, met Slovak President Peter Pellegrini on Sunday on his arrival in Bratislava, the first visit by a US secretary of state in seven years, and discussed energy and defence.

"An important topic of the talks was... defence cooperation and the fulfilment of commitments arising from Nato summits," Pellegrini's office said in a statement.

Rubio later met Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico, who visited Trump in Florida last month. The USdiplomat's trip follows his attendance at the Munich Security Conference over the last few days.

On Monday, Rubio is expected to meet Hungarian leader Viktor Orban, who is trailing in most polls ahead of an election in April when he could be voted out of power. "President (Trump) said he's very supportive of him, and so are we," Rubio said ahead of his trip.

EU dismisses 'civilisational erasure' claims

A top European Union official rejected the notion that Europe faces "civilisational erasure," pushing back at criticism of the continent by the Trump administration, reports AP. "Contrary to what some may say, woke, decadent Europe is not facing civilisational erasure," EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said.

UK eyes Russia sanctions after Navalny poisoning findings

LONDON, AFP: Britain will consider "increasing sanctions" against Russia following findings from five European states that opposition leader Alexei Navalny was killed by dart-frog toxin in a Russian prison, UK foreign minister Yvette Cooper said Sunday.

"We continue to look at coordinated action, including increasing sanctions on the Russian regime," Cooper told the BBC from the Munich Security Conference, where the UK, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden announced findings that the Russian state was a prime suspect for poisoning Navalny two years ago.

Navalny, a staunch critic of President Vladimir Putin, died in a Russian prison in mysterious conditions on February 16, 2024, while serving a 19-year sentence.

The five European countries on Saturday said that a deadly toxin known as epibatidine, found in Ecuadorian dart frogs, was found on laboratory analyses of samples from his body.

SPORT

Curtains fall on thrilling race

SAJITH B WARRIER
GOA, DHNS

Goa's date with high-octane racing ended on a high note on Sunday (February 15) as it brought down curtains to the Indian Racing Festival's (IRF) Goa Street Race, which constituted Round 4 of the Indian Racing League.

While Gas Raoul Hyman and Alister Yoong claimed victories on the opening day at the custom-built FIA track, adjacent to the Manohar International Airport, it was it was Hyman and Fabienne Wohleend who hogged the limelight on Day 2 by winning the blue riband event --- by guiding Goa Aces JA Racing to a memorable relay-format victory.

As fans braved the hot sun to see cars zoom past at frenetic speed, one of the features of the IRL that stood out was its inclusive team structure. Each outfit fielded four drivers: an experienced international racer, an emerging global talent, an Indian driver and a female competitor. Two drivers shared one car with them being categorised as Driver A and Driver B.

A slice of IRF action in Goa.

Canada curling accused of cheating

Favourites alleged of touching stone twice after release

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO (ITALY), AP

Controversy is swirling in curling at the Winter Olympics and it's all centering on whether the mighty Canadian team is cheating.

Both men's and women's teams have now been accused of the same infraction: double-touching the curling stone after it is released.

It comes as the historic curling powerhouse finds its ego bruised. Its mixed doubles team didn't even play for a medal, and its women's team cannot afford to lose more matches if they hope to advance.

Canada's women curling team. REUTERS

On Friday, Swedish curler Oskar Eriksson accused Canadian curler Marc Kennedy of breaking the rules by touching the rock again after initially releasing it down the sheet of ice. Kennedy blew up, launching an expletive-laden outburst.

'King of the Moguls'

Canada's "King of the Moguls" Mikael Kingsbury signed off his Olympic career in style on Sunday, winning the men's dual moguls to collect his fifth medal at a Winter Games, reports AFP from Livigno.

The 33-year-old fell marginally behind Ikuma Horishima early in the super final in Livigno but his Japanese opponent lost control, flying over the second jump with no tricks to cross the line first. Kingsbury kept his cool and knew he had won as he finished.

CRICKET WOMEN'S T20I

India beat Oz

Kaur's girls post 21-run win via DLS method to take 1-0 lead in 3-game series

SYDNEY, PTI

India were clinical with both bat and ball as they defeated Australia by 21 runs under the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern (DLS) method in the first Women's T20 International to start their tour Down Under on a resounding note here Sunday.

Seamer Arundhati Reddy (4/22) led an excellent bowling display as India packed off Australia for 133.

Such was the Indian bowlers' performance that Australia were bundled out with two overs to spare.

In reply, vice-captain Smriti Mandhana was unbeaten on a 17-ball 16 with Jemimah Rodrigues giving her company, when the heavens opened up to force an interruption.

Play could not resume after that and India, who were 50 for one in 5.1 overs, were declared deserving winners. The DLS par score after 5.1 overs was 29.

The big-hitting Shafali Verma played her part before being dismissed by Australia's new skipper Sophie Molineux, smashing her way to an 11-ball 21.

Asked to bat first, Australia were quick off the blocks and raced to 22 in 2.2 overs when Beth Mooney (5) got a leading edge while trying to loft a Renuka Singh delivery, but only managed to sky the ball for Smriti Mandhana to complete the catch at cover.

The other opener, Georgia Voll (18 off 10 balls) followed Mooney to the dressing room soon after as she got a thin edge while attempting to play the cut shot against a wide delivery by Kranti Gaud, and wicketkeeper Richa Ghosh did the rest comfortably.

Brief scores: Australia: 133 all out in 18 overs (Phoebe Litchfield 26, Georgia Wareham 30; Renuka Singh 2-14, Arundhati Reddy 4-22, Shree Charani 2-14) lt to India: 50/1 in 5.1 overs. **Result:** India won by 21 runs (DLS method). **PoM:** Arundhati Reddy. **Series:** India lead 3-match series 1-0. **Next match:** Canberra (Feb 19).

Arundhati Reddy

India A women trounce Pak A

BANGKOK, PTI: Skipper Radha Yadav led a dominant spin display before Karnataka's Vrinda Dinesh hammered a blazing half-century as India A Women cruised to an emphatic eight-wicket win over Pakistan A Women in the Women's Asia Cup Rising Stars here on Sunday.

The victory marked India A's first win of the tournament after its seven-wicket defeat to the UAE A in the opener.

Brief scores: Pakistan A: 93 all out in 18.5 overs (Saima Thakor 2-14, Radha Yadav 2-11, Prema Rawat 2-16) lt to India A: 97/2 in 10.1 overs (Vrinda Dinesh 55 n.o.). **Result:** India win by 8 wkts. **PoM:** Vrinda Dinesh.

India go down to Argentina

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Indian men's hockey team suffered a fourth defeat on the trot after going down 2-4 to Argentina in their last match of the FIH Pro League in Rourkela on Sunday.

For the visitors, Lucio Mendez (43rd, 49th) starred with two strikes while Tomas Domene (18th) and Tadeo Marcucci (28th) netted one goal apiece. Aditya Arjun Lalage (50th) and Sanjay's (59th) goals saved India some blushes.

Result: India: 2 (Aditya Arjun Lalage 50th, Sanjay's 59th) lt to Argentina: 4 (Tomas Domene 18th, Tadeo Marcucci 28th, Lucio Mendez 43rd, 49th).

Vinicius brace fires Madrid top

MADRID, AFP: Vinicius Junior won and converted two penalties as Real Madrid thumped Real Sociedad 4-1 on Saturday to move provisionally top of La Liga.

An impressive performance from Trent Alexander-Arnold on his first start in two-and-a-half months also helped Los Blancos move two points clear of champions Barcelona, who visit Girona on Monday.

Madrid's convincing display inflicted a first defeat for visiting American coach Pellegrino Matarazzo, in his 10th match at the helm of Real Sociedad.

Young striker Gonzalo Garcia and Fede Valverde were also on target for Alvaro Arbeloa's Madrid.

Results: Real Madrid: 4 (Garcia 5th, Vinicius 25th P, 48th P, Valverde 31st) bt Real Sociedad: 1 (Oyarzabal 21st P); Espanyol: 2 (Garcia 66th, Dolan 86th) drew with Celta Vigo: 2 (Jutgla 38th, Iglesias 90+3rd); Getafe: 2 (Arambarri 41st P, Satriano 53rd) bt Villarreal: 1 (Mikautadze 76th); Sevilla: 1 (Sow 42nd) drew with Alaves: 1 (Martinez 60th).

Himachal Pradesh inch closer to snatching lead vs Karnataka

BENGALURU, DHNS: Karnataka bowlers had a long day as Himachal Pradesh batters scored as many as seven half-centuries, ending the day on 473/6 on Day 3 of their Elite Group D match of the Col CK Nayudu Trophy in Amtar on Sunday.

HP skipper Mirdul Surroch missed out on a ton by just three strokes while Vaibhav Kalta (64), Innesh Mahajan (62), Sagar Malhan (54), Atul Jaswal (54) complemented the captain in the top and middle-order.

Hardik Raj (2/102) and other bowlers provided some respite by bringing HP to 375/6 in the final session but lower-order batters Deep Singh (52 n.o.) and Daksh Narayan (52 n.o.) added an unbeaten 98 runs to trail Karnataka by a mere 64 runs.

Brief scores: Karnataka: 537 vs HP: (O/n: 114/1) 473/6 in 124 overs (Sagar Malhan 54, Atul Jaswal 54, Innesh Mahajan 62, Vaibhav Kalta 64, Deep Singh 52 n.o., Daksh Narayan 52 n.o.; Hardik Raj 2-102).

CLINICAL INDIA swat aside Pakistan

Kishan, bowlers star as SKY & Co enter Super 8s; Agha's men down to 3rd spot

SIDNEY KIRAN
COLOMBO, DHNS

As much as fans from the subcontinent and the powers that run cricket try to romanticise the India-Pakistan rivalry, the harsh reality is, it exists only in their minds or on paper. India, especially in T20 cricket, have raced so clear of Pakistan that the match-up between the two sides, which every broadcaster craves for, hardly lives up to the billing.

So, Sunday at the R Premadasa Stadium was no different. Despite the manufactured drama surrounding this ICC T20 World Cup Group contest over the last fortnight, it turned out to be another lop-sided affair as defending champions India hammered Pakistan by 61 runs to secure their passage into the Super Eights with a game to spare.

After riding on a smash-and-grab 77 off 40 balls from Ishan Kishan and some late fireworks from Shivam Dube (27, 17b) and Rinku Singh (11 n.o., 4b) to post a competitive 175/7, the entire bowling unit came to the party in grand style to dismiss Pakistan for 114 in 18 overs.

Kishan, who has been batting like a man possessed since making a stunning return from wilderness to the national team last month for the New Zealand series, yet again laid the foundation with his breathtaking hitting. On a tacky pitch where the rest of his batting colleagues struggled to force the pace against a sextet of Pakistan spinners, the other-worldly Kishan dismantled them with utter ease.

His strategy was simple: take the attack to them in the opening two or three balls, force them off their lines and lengths instantly, and then cash in on the remaining part of the over. To deploy that game plan, he either stepped down the track or shuffled around the crease, and it worked to the hilt for him. Pulls, cuts, power-packed shots straight down the ground, Kishan absolutely bludgeoned everything in his path.

The way Kishan was toying with the Pakistani spinners, racing to 50 off 27 balls in the seventh over, it looked like he may well go on to bring up the first century of this World Cup as Pakistan skipper Salman Ali Agha looked clueless with none of his bowlers able to contain the Jharkhandi.

Kishan, however, started to cramp up and received extensive treatment after the eighth over to his right leg. Four balls later, Kishan departed, missing the ball while trying to cut the impressive Saim Ayub (3/25) that rattled his stumps. It was the wicket which Pakistan desperately wanted and they started to apply the chokehold on India with the spinners rediscovering their mojo.

Ayub, Mohammed Nawaz and Usman Tariq bowled slower through the air, making things really hard for Tilak Varma and skipper Suryakumar Yadav. Varma looked ragged while Suryakumar, despite trying his best, could only find the odd boundary. As the big hits dried up, the run-rate started to dip, going below 9 for the first time after 14 overs.

Pressure started to mount on Varma and Suryakumar and something had to give away. Varma went for a wild sweep off Ayub and was adjudged LBW and a ball later Hardik Pandya perished while attempting a big shot. At 126/4 in the 15th over, the wheels appeared to be coming off the Indian innings.

The big reason behind their phenomenal success in this format over the last two years has been their ability to find multiple heroes when they are under the pump. This time Dube and Rinku rose to the occasion, their late flourish powering India to a competitive total. The bowlers then completed the demolition job.

India's Ishan Kishan was the only half-centurion (77 off 40 balls) in the match as India trounced Pakistan by 61 runs in their T20 World Cup Group A match in Colombo on Sunday. PTI

SCOREBOARD

INDIA

Kishan b Ayub	77 (40b, 10x4, 3x6)
Abhishek c Afridi b Agha	0 (4b)
Varma lbw Ayub	25 (24b, 2x4, 1x6)
Suryakumar c Ayub b Tariq	32 (29b, 3x4)
Pandya c Azam b Ayub	0 (1b)
Dube (run out)	27 (17b, 3x4, 1x6)
Rinku (not out)	11 (4b, 1x4, 1x6)
Axar c Ayub b Afridi	0 (1b)
Extras (LB-2, W-1)	**3**
TOTAL (for 7 wkts, 20 overs)	**175**

Fall of wickets: 1-1 (Abhishek), 2-88 (Kishan), 4-126 (Pandya), 5-159 (Suryakumar), 6-175 (Dube), 7-175 (Axar).

Bowling: Agha 2-0-10-1, Afridi 2-0-31-1, Ayub 4-0-25-3, Abrar 3-0-38-0, Shadab 1-0-17-0, Nawaz 4-0-28-0, Tariq 4-0-24-1 (w-1).

PAKISTAN

Farhan c Rinku b Pandya	0 (4b)
Ayub lbw Bumrah	6 (2b, 1x6)
Agha c Pandya b Bumrah	4 (4b, 1x4)
Azam b Axar	5 (7b)
Usman st Kishan b Axar	44 (34b, 6x4, 1x6)
Shadab c Dube b Varma	14 (15b, 1x4)
Nawaz c Dube b Kuldeep	4 (5b, 1x4)
Ashraf c Rinku b Chakravarthy	10 (14b, 1x4)
Afridi (not out)	23 (19b, 2x4, 1x6)
Abrar lbw Chakravarthy	0 (1b)
Tariq b Pandya	0 (3b)
Extras (LB-1, W-3)	**4**
TOTAL (all out, 18 overs)	**114**

Fall of wickets: 1-0 (Farhan), 2-6 (Ayub), 3-13 (Agha), 4-34 (Babar), 5-73 (Usman), 6-78 (Shadab), 7-78 (Shadab), 8-97 (Ashraf), 9-97 (Abrar).

Bowling: Pandya 3-1-16-2 (w-1), Bumrah 2-0-17-2 (w-1), Axar 4-0-29-2, Chakravarthy 3-0-17-2, Kuldeep 3-0-14-1, Tilak 2-0-11-1, Rinku 1-0-9-0.

Result: India won by 61 runs.
PoM: Ishan Kishan.
India's next match: Vs Netherlands (Nov 18, Ahmedabad).

India stay firm on no handshake

Skipper Suryakumar looks past his Pak counterpart at toss

SIDNEY KIRAN
COLOMBO, DHNS

Suryakumar Yadav (left) and Salman Ali Agha.

Indian skipper Suryakumar Yadav yet again refused to shake hands with his Pakistani counterpart Salman Ali Agha at the toss ahead of their ICC T20 World Cup Group A affair at the R Premadasa Stadium here on Sunday.

All eyes were on Suryakumar as he walked out to the centre of the pitch but the Mumbaikar barely looked Salman in the eye, continueing the hostilities that cropped up during the Asia Cup in Dubai last September.

During the continental championship in the Gulf city, Suryakumar courted controversy by refusing to shake hands with Salman.

The tournament was held in the aftermath of the ghastly Pahalgam terror attack that claimed around 25 Indian lives. While the cold war continued to brew between the current generation, players from the past were seen sharing bonhomie during the pre-match media activities for the official broadcaster.

Suryakumar's predecessor Rohit Sharma, under whom India won the trophy in 2024, shook hands with Pakistan pace-bowling great Wasim Akram right after posing with the cup.

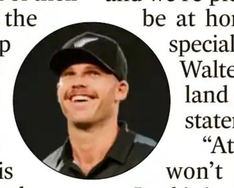
Akram then put his arms around Rohit's shoulders, the two walking back smiling all the way.

Group A

Teams	M	W	L	Pts	NRR
IND (Q)	3	**3**	**0**	6	**+3.05**
USA	4	**2**	**2**	4	**+0.78**
PAK	3	**2**	**1**	4	**-0.40**
NED	3	**1**	**2**	2	**-1.35**
NAM	3	**0**	**3**	0	**-2.44**

NZ's Ferguson to return home

AHMEDABAD, PTI: New Zealand pace bowler Lockie Ferguson **(in pic)** will return home on Sunday to be with his wife for the birth of their first child and miss the team's final Group D match of the T20 World Cup against Canada.



Head coach Rob Walter said the plan is for Ferguson to rejoin the squad to be available for the Super 8s of the tournament should they reach that stage.

New Zealand, who suffered a seven-wicket loss to South Africa in their Group D match here on Saturday, face Canada in Chennai on Tuesday.

"It's an incredibly exciting time for Lockie and Emma and we're pleased that he'll be at home for such a special occasion," said Walter in a New Zealand Cricket (NZC) statement.

"At this stage, we won't be replacing Lockie in the squad as the plan would be for him to return for the Super 8 phase of the tournament.

"But our travelling reserves Ben Sears and Cole McConchie are ready to be called into the squad."

England-Italy in a rivalry of different ball game

KOLKATA, PTI: Two-time champions England will look to seal their Super Eights berth when they take on T20 World Cup debutants and fierce football rivals Italy in their final Group C match here on Monday.

England and Italy share a fierce sporting rivalry on the football pitch, producing some unforgettable moments, including the former's penalty shootout win in the Euro 2020 final at Wembley.

On Monday, however, the rivalry will shift from football to cricket for the first time, adding an interesting sub-plot to this clash at Eden Gardens that witnessed a 35,000-plus crowd for the England-Scotland match on Saturday.

The 'Bazballers' come into the game with momentum after a pressure win over Scotland as they seem to be slowly finding their mojo in the tournament.

The biggest positive for England was Tom Banton's composed half-century at No. 4 during a tricky 153-run chase.

On a pitch that offered bounce and carry -- where six batters were dismissed attempting sweep shots -- Banton showed maturity by curbing his trademark reverse flicks.

He instead targeted straight boundaries, playing in the V-zone to produce one of the finest knocks of his career and keep England's campaign alive.

LIVE 3 PM

Anthony Mosca

Jansen puts on show his bag of tricks

VIGNESH BHARADWAJ
AHMEDABAD, DHNS

Marco Jansen picked up his career best (4/40) T20I figures in South Africa's seven-wicket win over New Zealand at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. AFP

Just like any other sport, cricket has undergone massive change over the years. The flat surfaces, the improved bat qualities and the shorter boundaries have all resulted in reducing bowlers' role to that of mere participants in white-ball formats.

Trends and consumption demands suggest cricket will remain a batter-friendly sport, and the latest being the hype around 300-plus totals in the ongoing T20 World Cup.

To their credit, however, bowlers constantly look to evolve to keep themselves relevant by expanding their bowling armoury.

Among a myriad variations that have been discovered, the knuckle ball and the back of the hand slower delivery have been the most effective for fast bowlers.

For the unversed, a knuckle ball is the one where the bowler grips the ball with their knuckles of the index and middle fingers instead of using the finger tips.

Whereas for the back of the hand delivery, the bowler rotates the wrist to generate top spin, so that the ball dips before it gets to the other end.

At the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad here, Marco Jansen unfurled his full repertoire of tricks, en route to his career-best T20I figures of 4/40.

"I've been training that knuckle thing. It's not a knuckle, but it's also not the palm. It's basically like my own version between the two," Jansen said.

Just when New Zealand were crawling back into the game, from a wobbly 64/4 to 138/4, Jansen deployed his new weapon, completely bamboozling a set Mark Chapman.

The delivery held in the surface, inviting a mistake, as Chapman was a little too early on the shot and had his leading edge go to backward point.

"There was a period where people bought the palm ball. But this, it is a little different as you keep it deep in the palm. Very satisfied that it is coming off."

When asked about where he found the inspiration to add to his skillset, Jansen said it was about constantly evolving as a bowler.

"Personally, it was just to get another ball to add to my arsenal. I felt like I only had the one variation and the batters could line me up. So that was the whole thought about it."

Earlier in the powerplay, Jansen had dismissed the dangerous Finn Allen with another one of his variations: the off-cutter.

The left-arm quick's off-cutter is slightly lower in trajectory than his knuckle-palm ball, and dips a little quicker than his new variation.

"The off-cutter is just a normal off-cutter that I've just been training to be a little bit better. And they both worked for me today."

While unpredictabiliy remains a necessity in a game that's constantly changing, Jansen also underlined the importance of sticking to the strengths and adapting to each surface.

"Normally I try to go a bit fuller because I get more bounce, which has helped me. And then, it's just basically what the wicket offers. If the wicket has a nice pace and bounce, I try to stick to my line and lengths."

Australia mull including Smith for SL fixture

PALLEKELE, PTI

LIVE 7 PM

Injury-hit Australia could consider bringing in veteran Steve Smith to bolster their stuttering batting as the former champions aim to keep their fate in their own hands when they face Sri Lanka in a crucial T20 World Cup Group B clash here on Monday.

Australia risk an early exit after suffering a shock 23-run defeat to Zimbabwe in their previous match. They now need victories in their remaining group matches against Oman and Sri Lanka to progress to the Super Eights without relying on other results.

Australia are currently third on the group table with two points from as many games.

The 2021 champions, who have been marred by injuries, were bowled out for 146 following a dramatic top-order collapse against Zimbabwe.

Captain Mitchell Marsh, who also opens the innings, missed Australia's second game running and remains under an injury cloud suffering from internal testicular bleeding.

Smith has joined the squad as Marsh's cover, but the 36-year-old is yet to be officially added to the 15-man T20 World Cup squad.

Having suffered a shocking defeat to Zimbabwe, Australia will hope to get their campaign back on track with a win over Sri Lanka on Monday. AFP FILE PHOTO

Sanjay Krishnamurthi

USA ease past gritty Namibia

CHENNAI, PTI: Sanjay Krishnamurthi's explosive unbeaten half-century followed by a disciplined bowling show powered USA to a crucial 31-run win over Namibia, in a must-win Group C clash here on Sunday, keeping their slim Super Eights hopes alive.

With back-to-back victories, USA finished the group stage on four points and are on third place behind India and Pakistan as they remain in contention for a place in the next round from Group A, though they will depend on other results.

Opting to bat, skipper Monank Patel set the tone with a fluent 30-ball 52 before Krishnamurthi hammered an unbeaten 68 off 33 balls to lift USA to their highest-ever T20 World Cup total of 199/4, also the second-highest total by an Associate team at the men's T20 World Cup.

In reply, Namibia were restricted to 168/6 despite a strong start given by Louren Steenkamp (58 off 39 balls; 5x4, 3x6).

The Namibian opener Steenkamp provided early fireworks, especially in a 20-run fifth over when he smashed Ali Khan for two fours and a six.But USA struck back immediately as Shadley van Schalkwyk dismissed Jan Frylinck (19), who miscued one straight back to the bowler.

Brief scores: USA: 199/4 in 20 overs (Monank Patel 52, Sanjay Krishnamurthi 68 n.o., Milind Kumar 28; Willem Myburgh 2-22, Gerhard Erasmus 2-27) bt Namibia: 168/6 in 20 overs (Louren Steenkamp 58, Jan Nicol Loftie-Eaton 28, JJ Smit 31; Shadley van Schalkwyk 2-30).
Result: USA won by 31 runs.
PoM: Sanjay Krishnamurthi.

Rashid's Afghanistan target revival

NEW DELHI, PTI

Rashid Khan

UAE will look to plug their middle-order frailties, particularly against spin, when they take on a hurting Afghanistan in a must-win Group D clash of the T20 World Cup here on Monday.

The two sides head into the contest after contrasting results in their previous outings. UAE scraped past Canada to register their first win, while Afghanistan suffered a heartbreaking defeat despite pushing their last game into two Super Overs in one of the greatest T20 matches.

With South Africa and New Zealand occupying the top two spots in the group with six and four points respectively, UAE's qualification hopes hinge on a combination of victories and favourable results elsewhere.

Afghanistan, meanwhile, are desperate to open their account after coming agonisingly close against South Africa. They not only need to win their remaining matches convincingly but also rely on other outcomes to stay in contention.

UAE were handed a 10-wicket thrashing by New Zealand earlier and appeared headed for another defeat when Canada reduced them to 66 for 4 in the 13th over while chasing 150. Their top and middle order struggled against spin before opener Aryansh Sharma (74 off 53) anchored the chase. Sohaib Khan's late surge (51 off 29) then helped them complete a remarkable turnaround.

However, UAE's batting will face a sterner test against a formidable spin trio of captain Rashid Khan, Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Mohammad Nabi.

LIVE 11 AM

Windies sail into Super 8s

MUMBAI, PTI

Skipper Shai Hope led the way with an unbeaten 61 with Shimron Hetmyer in tow with 46 not out as the West Indies registered a nine-wicket victory against an insipid Nepal, becoming the first team to qualify for the Super Eights stage of the T20 World Cup, here on Sunday.

After Jason Holder returned fine figures of 4/27 to restrict Nepal to a modest 133 for 8 on the back of Dipendra Singh Airee's valiant 58 not out, West Indies cruised to 134 for 1 in 15.2 overs to win the match with 28 balls to spare in their Group C clash.

With three wins from as many matches, West Indies are at the top of the Group C and made it to the Super 8s.

West Indies captain Hope bounced back to form with 61 not out from 44 balls, studded with five fours and three sixes. On the other hand, the in-form Hetmyer remained unbeaten on 46 (32 balls; 4 fours, 2 sixes) in another significant contribution. Airee's first-innings heroics was the only bright spot for the Rhinos and their fans who once against filled up the Wankhede Stadium's stands in large numbers, but returned disappointed with another massive defeat.

Brief scores: Nepal 133/8 in 20 overs (Dipendra Singh Airee 58, Sompal Kami 26 n.o.; Jason Holder 4-27) lt to West Indies: 134/1 in 15.2 overs (Shai Hope 61 n.o., Shimron Hetmyer 46 n.o.).
Result: WI won by 9 wkts.
PoM: Jason Holder.

Group C

Teams	M	W	L	Pts	NRR
WI (Q)	3	**3**	**0**	6	**1.82**
ENG	3	**2**	**1**	4	**-0.14**
SCOT	3	**1**	**2**	2	**0.36**
ITA	2	**1**	**1**	2	**-0.35**
NEP	3	**0**	**3**	0	**-1.94**

Vivek-ridden Angelisa wins Madras Race Club Trophy

MUMBAI RESULTS

Angelisa, from the stables of Pesi Shroff and ridden by G Vivek, won the Madras Race Club Trophy, the feature event of the Mumbai races on Sunday.

1. Homi Mehta Trophy - 2400M: Evaldo (Manoj Kumar) Akshay Kumar 1; Shubankar (Bhawani Singh) 2; Regina Memorabilis (Neeraj Rawal) 3; Wb: 4-1/4, 3-3/4L. T: 2-32.63. TB: Aman Altaf Hussain. Fav: Evaldo.

2. Madras Race Club Trophy - 1600M: Angelisa (Tegbir Singh) G. Vivek 1; Alpha Strike (Neeraj Rawal) 2; Lorenzo (Yash Narredu) 3; Antino (Antony Raj) 4; Wb: 4-1/2, 2-3/4, 1/2L. T: 1-38.38. TB: Pesi Shroff. Fav: Angelisa.

3. Amateur Riders Club Trophy - 1600M: Miracle Of Hanukah (Solomon Sopher) Trevor Patel 1; Don Julio (P Dhebe) 2; Land Of Plenty (Ramswarup) 3; Flaming Lamborgini (S Mosin) 4; Wb: Nk, 5-1/2, 6-1/4L. 1-38.20. TB: Aman Altaf Hussain. Fav: Miracle Of Hanukah.

4. Roman Rose Plate - 1200M: Gunfire (Sanjay Kothari) Yash Narredu 1; Zayyan (G Vivek) 2; Europe (Neeraj Rawal) 3; Phantom Stirke (Trevor Patel) 4; Wb: 1-1/4, 2-3/4, 6L. T: 1-10.18. TB: Mallesh Narredu. Fav: Gunfire. .

5. V R Koregaonkar Plate - 1600M: Azalea (Vijay B Shirke) G Vivek 1; Silver Braid (Mustakim Alam) 2; Tajiri (Trevor Patel) 3; Beyond Stars (Zervan) 4; Wb: 2-3/4, Shd, 3-1/2L T: 1-37.41. TB: Pesi Shroff. Fav: Tajiri.

6. Muncipal Commissioner's Trophy- 1400M: Charisse (Vijay Shirke) A Prakash 1; Marcus (Antnoy Raj) 2; Undercover (Trevor Patel) 3; Juracan (David Allan) 4; Wb: 1-3/4, 1L, Lnk. T: 1-23.60. TB: Pesi Shroff. Fav: Undercover.

7. T.M.Goculdas Plate - 1000M: Your Unforgettable (Cyrus Poonawlla) Neeraj Rawal 1; Esperanza (Aditya Waydande) 2; Liban (A.Prakash) 3; Cellini (Akshay Kumar) 4; Wb: 1-3/4, 4-3/4, 3-1//4L. T: 0-57.51. TB: Pradeep Chouhan. Fav: Esperanza.

8. Ahmed I. Rahimtoola Trophy - 1200M: El Moran (S R Sanas) Trevor Patel 1; Lucio (Aditya Waydande) 2; Money Fair (Akshay Kumar) 3; Surrealist (G Vivek) 4; Wb: 3, 3/4, 3/4L. T: 1-10.58. TB: Narendra Lagad. Fav: Money Fair.

9. Stunning Plate - 1000M: Viennoise (Mrs B Chenoy) A Omkar 1; Arbitrage (Ramswarup) 2; Regal Galleria (B Nikhil) 3; Sky Full Of Stars (A.Gaikwad) 4; Wb: 4-1/4, 3-1/2L. Nk. T: 0-58.73. TB: Bezan Chenoy. Fav: Viennoise.

Bengaluru dividends

I race: Rs 14w; Fc: Rs 44; Shp: Rs 23.
II race: Rs 13w; 13, 27p; Fc: Rs 46; Q: Rs 42; Shp: Rs 39; Thp: Rs 32; Tri: Rs 37 & 12; Ex: Rs 147 & 175.
III race: Rs 14w; 10, 11p; Fc: Rs 20; Q: Rs 17; Shp: Rs 18; Thp: Rs 16; Tri: Rs 20 & 10.
IV race: Rs 15w; 10, 19, 25p; Fc: Rs 41; Q: Rs 33; Shp: Rs 34; Thp: Rs 41; Tri: Rs 251 & 189; Ex: Rs 360 & 102.
V race: Rs 44w; 11, 36, 13p; Fc: Rs 1,781; Q: Rs 894; Shp: Rs 103; Thp: Rs 44; Tri: Rs 1,611 & 641; Ex: Rs 23,064 & 6,589.
VI race: Rs 177w; 46, 28, 14p; Fc: Rs 4,923; Q: Rs 1,348; Shp: Rs 67; Thp: Rs 51; Tri: Rs 10,822 & 2,319; Ex: Rs 49,727 & 21,311.
VII race: Rs 25w; 10, 17p; Fc: Rs 55; Q: Rs 21; Shp: Rs 32; Thp: Rs 21; Tri: Rs 121 & 132.
VIII race: Rs 32w; 13, 10, 10p; Fc: Rs 144; Q: Rs 72; Shp: Rs 32; Thp: Rs 45; Tri: Rs 273 & 83; Ex: Rs 320 & 156.
IX race: Rs 19w; 10, 24, 50p; Fc: Rs 105; Q: Rs 150; Shp: Rs 70; Thp: Rs 95; Tri: Rs 1,894 & 955; Ex: Rs 25,682 & 3,144.

I Jackpot: Rs 4,766 (55).
Runner-up: Rs 64 (1756).
II Jackpot: Rs 38,634 (20).
Runner-up: Rs 9,199 (36).
I treble: Rs 166 (365).
II treble: Rs 3,559 (12).
III treble: Rs 525 (170).

CRICKET RANJI TROPHY

Rahul, Padikkal pack a punch

Left-right pair helps K'taka end Day 1 on 355/2 vs U'khand

LUCKNOW, PTI

Test opener K L Rahul (141) and skipper Devdutt Padikkal (148 n.o.) slammed big hundreds and powered Karnataka to a commanding 355 for two on the opening day of their Ranji Trophy semifinal against Uttarakhand here on Sunday.

Uttarakhand captain Kunal Chandela won the toss and opted to field first, but his decision did not yield the desired result for his team as Karnataka saw two of their top batters torment the opposition bowlers with their high-quality batting.

Coming off his brilliant century in Karnataka's victory over Mumbai in the quarterfinals, Rahul, India's Test and ODI specialist, constructed another magnificent innings that was built on the back of a fine mix of aggression and caution.

Rahul made 141 off 211 balls, decorating his 25th first-class century with 11 fours and five sixes, the number of maximums clearly indicating that he was open to take the aerial route when presented with an opportunity.

Padikkal was batting on 148 off 236 balls when the stumps were drawn on the first day's play at the Ekana Cricket Stadium.

Karun Nair, the eight-time Ranji champions' other major batter, was giving Padikkal company with an unbeaten 37 at the close of play.

During his stay in the middle, Padikkal struck 16 boundaries and two sixes, and he will look to continue in the same fashion on the second day.

The duo of Rahul and Padikkal was associated in a mammoth partnership of 278 runs, which is Karnataka's second highest stand for the second wicket since 2005-06. The highest is 284, against Maharashtra in 2009-10.

This was also the second-highest second-wicket partnership of the season. Tamil Nadu's Vimal Khumar and Pradosh Ranjan Paul's 307 against Nagaland is the highest second wicket partnership of the ongoing season.

Earlier, after being asked to bat, Karnataka lost Mayank Agarwal early.

However, Rahul and Padikkal piled on the runs thereafter and troubled the Uttarakhand bowlers for a major part of the day.

With his father-in-law and Bollywood actor Suneil Shetty in attendance, Rahul produced another fine innings, and brought up his hundred with a single off part-timer Avneesh Sudha while Karnataka's total to 221 for one in 52 overs.

Karnataka, who were 133 for one at lunch, continued their dominance in the second session and progressed to 263 for one at tea with both Rahul and Padikkal looking in great touch with the bat.

This was some time after Padikkal reached his century with a six over long-on off former Karnataka left-arm spinner J Suchith, the maximum taking him from 98 to 104.

Even as Uttarakhand struggled for answers, the stand was finally broken when Aditya Rawat, brought back into the attack, struck with his first ball in the day's final session of play, a leading edge from Rahul bringing some relief for the beleaguered side.

Skipper Devdutt Padikkal (left) was unbeaten on 148 while KL Rahul got out after 141 as Karnataka called the shots on the opening day of their Ranji Trophy semifinal against Uttarakhand in Lucknow on Sunday.

SCORE BOARD

KARNATAKA (I Innings): KL Rahul c&b Aditya 141 (211b, 11x4, 5x6), Mayank Agarwal c Chopra b Aditya 5 (32b, 1x4), Devdutt Padikkal (batting) 148 (236b, 16x4, 2x6), Karun Nair (batting) 37 (65b, 5x4, 1x6). Extras (NB-4, W-6, B-9, LB-5) 24.
TOTAL (for 2 wkts, 90 overs) 355.
Fall of wickets: 1-18 (Agarwal), 2-296 (Rahul).
Bowling: Abhay Negi 17-2-55-0, Janmejay Joshi 18-3-44-0, Aditya Rawat 14-2-73-2, Mayank Mishra 18-1-88-0, Jagadeesha Suchith 10-0-43-0, Avneesh Sudha 13-0-38-0.

Gharami rescues Bengal on Day 1

KALYANI (WB), PTI

A determined Sudip Gharami was patience personified as he carried from where he had left off in the quarterfinal with his second successive ton taking Bengal to 249 for 5 against Jammu and Kashmir on the opening day of the Ranji Trophy semifinal here on Sunday.

The dismissal of a set Shahbaz Ahmed (42 off 90 balls) at the fag end of the day, an in-cutter from left-arm seamer Sunil Kumar, will give J&K an opportunity to press home the advantage at the start of the second day when the new ball will be due after the last delivery of the 80th over is sent down.

Having batted 15-and-a-half hours for his match-winning 299 against Andhra in the quarterfinal, Gharami took fresh guard but seemed to have taken off from the previous game with an unbeaten 136 runs off 227 balls.

Sudip Kumar Gharami. PTI

Gharami came to the crease in the second over after veteran Sudip Chatterjee (0) was dismissed without troubling the scorers.

Gharami hit 19 fours and a lofted six in his near six hours of astute batsmanship, which also was a testament to his stamina and defensive technique.

He shared 85-run stand for the second wicket with skipper Abhimanyu Easwaran (49), who looked good before a delivery from Auqib Nabi moved a shade after pitching to knock back his off-stump.

Brief scores: Bengal: 249/5 in 79.5 overs (Abhimanyu Easwaran 49, Sudip Kumar Gharami 136 n.o., Shahbaz Ahmed 42; Auqib Nabi 2-48, Sunil Kumar 2-31) vs Jammu & Kashmir.

Raju finds title winner for Al-Ameen

BENGALURU, DHNS: Bengaluru's Al-Ameen Arts, Science and Commerce College won the Dr Isaac Abraham Memorial Hockey tournament by defeating Jain University 3-2 in the final on Sunday.

Raju netted the all-important winning goal for Al-Almeen in the 45th minute after Vittal (30th, 37th) equalised twice following goals by Jain University's Gaurav (24th) and Sapan (33rd).

Meanwhile, Hosur's Adhiyamaan College of Engineering beat Bengaluru's BMS College of Engineering 6-0 to win the Dr Noel Rasquinha Memorial event.

Results: Final: Dr Isaac Abraham Memorial Hockey tournament: Al-Ameen Arts, Science and Commerce College: 3 (Vittal 30th, 37th, Raju 45th) bt Jain University: 2 (Gaurav 24th, Sapan 33rd).
Dr Noel Rasquinha Memorial Hockey tournament: Adhiyamaan College of Engineering: 6 (Priyadarshan 2nd, 41st, 44th, Gurumurthi 15th, Suriya 24th, Harish 38th, Sheevak 43rd) bt BMS College of Engineering: 0.

Harmeet-Yashaswini end runners-up

CHENNAI, PTI: India's Harmeet Desai and Yashaswini Ghorpade finished runners-up in mixed doubles after they went down to Romanian second seeds Eduard Ionescu and Bernadette Szocs in the final in the WTT Star Contender Chennai here on Sunday.

Desai and Ghorpade lost 0-3 (9-11, 2-11, 8-11) to mark the best finish for an Indian pairing in the four editions of the WTT event.

Bengaluru FC march past Delhi

Chhetri, Sivasakthi find targets in hosts' 2-0 win

ADITYA K HALDER
BENGALURU, DHNS

Last year's runners-up Bengaluru FC began their fresh Indian Super League campaign with a bang in front of a boisterous home crowd as they defeated rechristened SC Delhi 2-0 at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium here on Sunday.

Returning to their home ground to see their beloved team after almost a year, the match almost was filled with everything they wanted to witness. A goal from the club's stalwart Sunil Chhetri (making him the oldest-ever goalscorer in the history of the league at 41), a blinder of a save by Gurpreet Singh Sandhu disallowing a lead to the visitors and the Viking Claps with the West Block Blues stand!

The match never went beyond BFC's reach with Sivasakthi N, who largely was quiet for most of the match, scoring the opening goal of the season in the 45+1st minute from a tap-in while Chhetri sealed the deal with another injury time goal at 90+2th.

BFC felt bullish from the word go with a roaring crowd backing them. Forwards, especially from right, found gaps in an unsettled Delhi defense, who committed an early error of losing the ball in their defensive third.

This allowed two telling opportunities in the first three minutes with both the wingers Ryan Williams and Ashique Kuruniyan to score. Debutant Ashique came the closest with a glancing header tipped over the crossbar by goalkeeper Vishal Yadav after Williams went wide from the right.

The intensity, however, was short lived as Delhi defense soon settled down with their pact midfield plugging the gaps while lone pivot Fanai Lalremtluanga seemed a bit cut off from the two box-to-box midfielders - Argentinian Braiain Fernandez and Suresh Singh Wangham.

BFC are too early in the season with players, in spite of all the eagerness, were bit rusty following the forced elongated off season. The telepathic connection between players wasn't there yet, allowing the visitors not just to settle down but soon foray into counter-attacks, albeit sporadically.

However it did turn dangerous when midfielder Mohammed Azhar wrestled past his marker during a counter-attack to put a beautiful through ball for sprinting Augustine Lalrochana from the right.

The wide forward shot low for the far post with power but not enough to go past BFC and India's No. 1 Gurpreet for an amazing save that brought the crowd on its feet.

BFC didn't squander this momentum as the first goal of the match came right at the beginning of injury time when left full back Roshan Singh floated a ball deep into the box for an overlapping right back Nikhil Poojari, who headed to an unmarked Sivasakthi to tap into the goal to send the crowd into a jubilation.

With the lead taken, BFC came back into the half much more confident while Delhi's continued reliance on sitting back and wait for an opening wasn't bothering the hosts anymore, who used defensive lateral passing neatly to control the tempo of the game with defensive midfielder Lalremtluanga at the heart of it.

Result: Bengaluru FC: 2 (N Sivasakthi 45+1st, Sunil Chhetri 90+2nd) bt SC Delhi: 0

Bengaluru FC players celebrate after scoring a goal against the Sporting Club Delhi in their ISL opener at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru on Sunday.
DH PHOTO/PUSHKAR V

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